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POEMS OF JOHN DAVIDSON

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P O E M S

BY JOHN DAVIDSON

INTRODUCTION BY R. M. WENLEY



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JOHN DAVIDSON

(1857-1909)

John Davidson, whom I was privileged to meet while an undergraduate at the University of Glasgow, when he was teaching in Alexander's Charity (1877-8)¹ and the Kelvin-side Academy (1881-2), left emphatic testamentary prohibition of a biography. This charge should be respected for its own sake. Moreover, the external career presents few features of public interest, prigs or morbid peepers aside. On the other hand, marking the onset of transition, Davidson, conspicuous among contemporaries, voyaged a veritable *Odyssey* of the spirit, charting unlikely bays or attempting to find deep-sea anchorage for the soul. Yet, the tumultuous rover never escaped his cultural background. Indeed, it is more decisive for the breathless, sometimes violent, volubility of the final decade than for the artistic experiments of the nineties. Peculiar to a small and very intense folk at a more or less typical stage receding rapidly now, perhaps none save a Scot of the same generation can share it intimately. Accordingly, I am staking this venture: and real venture it is, seeing the quest reck little of barebones biography, pursuing rather an elusive inner drama.

I.

Smiling sidewise, no doubt, Disraeli brought confidential information from the lips of Monsignor Berwick, for the benefit of that eager convert, Lady St. Jerome.

¹ Cf. *Life of A. C. Swinburne*, E. Gosse, pp. 243-4.
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"We sent two of our best men into Scotland some time ago, and they have invented a new Church, called the United Presbyterian. John Knox himself was never more violent or more mischievous. The United Presbyterians will do the business: they will render Scotland simply impossible to live in; and then, when the crisis arrives, the distracted and despairing millions will find refuge in the bosom of their only mother."¹

Showing that, despite preternatural acuteness, he could nod, "the old Jew" let care-free wit run away with him for once. In any case, the Monsignor's "old Scottish blood" must have been most "sedulously blended with that of the princely houses of the eternal city" to throb to such *bizarrie* about the land of his ancestors. Nevertheless, true to his brilliant touch of genius, Disraeli glimpsed a seminal idea. A nation saturated with the Old Testament Law and Prophets could hardly fail to breed incisive persons who, divining the transitive communal spirit, were bound to reveal unseen implications on a sudden, to prophesy and vituperate like Burns and Carlyle. Thus, Scottish religiosity, not as an ecclesiastical system, but as an attitude toward life, furnishes the clue to Davidson. Disavowing a creed, he could not disavow the cosmos. So he never permits himself to forget that dogma gone or going must be replaced by dogma come or coming. Consequently, it is nowise wonderful that, at length, the pugnacious disputant in him ousted the serener artist.

Since the nineties (febrile more than "naughty"), fundamental changes have overtaken the valuations peculiar to Anglo-Saxondom. Perhaps the most significant is the substitution of a secular for a theological perspective. Slow at first, this displacement has gained such momentum recently that the youth—the post-war youth conspicuously—find it impossible to recapture the outlook of their fathers; they cannot comprehend their grandfathers in the least. Now,

¹ *Lothair*, Chapter X.

Davidson grew up among the grandfathers (1860-80); his career was beset by perplexity and nigh frustrate, because he lived among the fathers when they were no longer sure of themselves (1885-1909). Thus he never could choose but dip his pen "in the hues of earthquake and eclipse." Verse may have been his medium, cosmogony set his mission. No one would accuse him of pietism. Notwithstanding, his spiritual energies (on occasions stupendous) betray their lineage from Scottish piety. Distinctively national, this piety has two roots: the peculiar blend of Scots character, and the temper of the Scottish Church. The one, dominated by intellect rather than feeling, that is, by knowledge rather than devotion, made men strangely familiar in handling their most holy things—an entire anthology of stories lends manifold illustration. The other, almost fiercely averse from formalism, subordinated the institution to the individual; yet, although stimulating personal reflection actively, threw it back upon the "law and order" guaranteed by the Divine Decrees. Hence a paradox. The individual, while keeping within the bold periphery of Calvinism, learned to deem himself the vehicle of a "higher law"—a conscience embodied in his person as it were. He could therefore carry appeal to this tribunal from current "abuses" in Church and State and doctrine; nay, to be plain, he did so on slight provocation. The Carleys were by no means peculiar—"pithy, bitter-speaking bodies, and awfu' fechters." As a result, history attests immense sacrifices freely and nobly made for conscience' sake. "Tilting at windmills," the cynic may comment. Truth to tell, the men in the lists deemed themselves witnesses for a coercive reality, hence their stark, pertinacious conviction. This is no place to relate the story in detail, but the bare facts must be reviewed, the more that they illuminate the indomitable persuasions behind *The Making of a Poet*. Notice the prepotent type, throwing straight through seven successive generations.

It is impossible for an alien, difficult for a Scot to unravel the numerous shifts of Nonconformity, with their "Lifters," "Constitutionalists," "Originals," "Protesters," "Lapsers," to name a few. Suffice it to say that between 1690 and Disraeli's United Presbyterians (1841), a dozen secessions occurred, as if in preparation for the great disavowal of 1843, when the Free *Protesting* Church arose in its might, to be deserted, quite characteristically, by the "Wee Frees" so late as 1900!¹ Provincial these controversies may seem; it is pertinent to pause and note that one of the least will reverberate till the crack of doom—in the poems of Burns. Fate bred Davidson in the atmosphere of a fourteenth sect, the Evangelical Union, a hive from the United Secession (1841), under the leadership of James Morison,² who had espoused heretical views about Faith, the extent of the Atonement, and of the Work of the Holy Spirit in the Plan of Salvation. This exclusive folk, despite a certain winsome ingenuousness, never prospered greatly, hence the narrow circumstances of Davidson's childhood and youth.

The merits of these proliferant appeals to the "higher law" need not detain us now. Still, it is indispensable to recall that the masterful leaders of this period were willing, even anxious, to go any lengths in support of their persuasions; and that, with the rank and file, ecclesiastico-theological differences postponed or hid other troubles. Further, these preoccupations preserved authoritative value pulsating with vitality far into Davidson's manhood. *A Ballad in Blank Verse of the Making of a Poet* is little over-drawn. I myself participated in the torrid scenes incident to the "trial" of Robertson Smith (1879).³ While, fifteen

¹ Cf. *The Life of James Cameron Lees*, Norman Maclean, pp. 52 f., and Chap. XV. (Glasgow, 1922).

² Davidson's father acted as colleague to Morison for several years.

³ Davidson celebrates this in the poem "The Rev. Habakkuk McGruder of Cape Wrath, in 1879": Cf. *In a Music Hall*.

years later, I was very familiar with a Highland parish, counting a round thousand souls, where nine Presbyterian places of worship flourished, eloquent testimony to the layman's absorption in the *proper* facilities for grace.¹ Moreover, at the outset of a vaunted twentieth century so potent did the "Wee Free" scandal wax that common decency invoked the authority of Imperial Parliament, to substitute practicable law for impracticable right. Inevitably, then, when he came to stretch his legs under "the wooden tables at the Cheshire Cheese," Davidson was in rather than of the Rhymers' Club. The spell cast by Oxford and Pater, swaying one set, the Latinisms of Baudelaire and Verlaine affected by the other, made him, if no interloper, at least something of an alien. His natural affiliations were not with the men whose personal trials and triumphs have rendered the far-off nineties so mysterious. He brought another element. For, as some seem to have forgotten, *The Yellow Book* coterie formed but one incident among many. Mr. Kipling was afoot, somewhat of a puzzle, the public teasing itself over the contrast between *Plain Tales* or *The Gadsbys* and *The Light That Failed*: Mr. Bernard Shaw, in his Fabian and *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* stage, loomed portentous. More significant for certain phases of Davidson's vaulting spirit, Henley and his "young" men of *The Scots Observer* and *The National Observer* had been preaching for half a decade a curious combination of imperialism with revolt, and *The New Review* was about to be born. George Meredith, on the point of achieving eleventh-hour incense, represented extreme *bourgeois* sophistication, charged with complex whim more than root-and-branch criticism. The natural man in Davidson trained with some of these, Henley particularly,

¹ Cf. for other examples, *The Life of James Cameron Lees*, pp. 96, 365 f.

rather than with the preciosities redolent of Oxford or Paris.¹ Indeed, so loose did he sit to the Cheshire Cheese that he is able to tell us he had not seen a theatrical performance for several years! In a word, the legendary nineties, as conventionally portrayed today, stimulated but could not ensnare him.

Bred amid influences which maximised the need for belief, Davidson fell an easy prey to distraction between the necessity and its insuperable difficulties when confronted with hostile ideas in an ampler environment. In the sequel, passionate faith was dispossessed by no less passionate desire to create truth; the latent Titanism of the appeal to conscience had its way. Experiment, culminating in starveling negatives, prevailed for a season, to be succeeded by vibrant assertion of the "higher veracity of the imagination."² Although oblivious of ecclesiastical disputes, Davidson inherited full share of the Protestant temper. He was a seceder by divine right. Like James Mill, he may have lost his religion while crossing the Tweed; he salved the will to protest, and protest ever implies an "absolute" of some sort. This, if burked for a time, lay in wait to take eventual toll,—witness the appalling episodes between *A Mother and Her Son*, or the attack on Latin Christianity in *Mammon and His Message*.

Another factor, easily slurred, deserves mention. Fate might have cradled Davidson south of the Border, to swell the ranks of mute, inglorious Miltos. There and then, membership in a feeble, frustrate sect would have brought fatal handicap. Such were the conditions sixty-five years ago that share in national education must have been most unlikely. At all events, the universities would have been

¹ Cf. Dedication to *The Testament of John Davidson*; "Song for the Twenty-fourth of May," *Fleet Street and Other Poems*, p. 147.

² *Sentences and Paragraphs*, p. 10.

out of reach. Rumors of this movement or that might have reached an English Davidson; direct, or, at least, early contact with leaders, could hardly have happened. In Scotland, on the contrary, the regulations then in force did not debar him from the universities and, although he never graduated, he gave attendance from time to time at Edinburgh and Glasgow, for four years off and on, if not more, as I recall. At Glasgow he seethed in the ferment induced by the teaching of Nichol and the Caird brothers. Further, the accident—lucky or unlucky, as you please—which led him to earn a livelihood in industrial laboratories at Greenock, also forced him to reckon with the dogmas and, no less, the realistic attitude of modern science. While, during half the period when he served apprenticeship to “shameful pedagogy,” the resources of university libraries were at his command, and he read with avidity. Thus, unfavourable as his circumstances might seem superficially, the facts were very different. I judge that he never submitted to the discipline necessary for scholarship and, in a sense, for culture. In any case, he remained a stranger to the second thoughts usually induced by real knowledge, so much so that it were easy to pick holes. Hence he puzzled some of his English associates bred in the reserves of Oxford,—Lionel Johnson, for instance. On the other hand, review of his works, backed by my own recollection, leads me to affirm that Nichol’s insistence upon Carlyle furnished a main element in the ultimate transvaluation; a mystic chemical cosmogony was another. Recall moreover that, thanks to practical traffic with physical science, Davidson never gave allegiance to the Darwinian cult as spread by Huxley and the early crusaders in “the terrible seventies.”¹

Thus, taking the entire curve of his career, little as he may have known it, little as he might have acknowledged it,

¹ Cf. the prose Introduction to *The Theatrorcrat*, pp. 52 f.; *Sentences and Paragraphs*, p. 30.

Scottish Protestantism set his bounds. But Protestantism is complex, various. Primarily evangelical, it drew upon many sources. It could be intellectual, mystic, pious with a puritan flavour, humanistic. The intellectual, humane, and mystic influences coloured the imagination of our poet-thinker. For him, Conscience was the "aboriginal vicar" of God, but the intellectual conscience necessary to individualisation of stupendous ideas.

"No Will to be the Mob, but mastering all,
A Will to be the Individual."¹

Again, like Eckhart, he had complete confidence in the Inner Light. "Within the soul of man was a profound capacity for divine truth"—ultimate truth, Davidson would have said. And he shared the mystic vision, holding that, somehow or other, a man can lay firm grip upon the essence of things, nay, constitute himself *the* medium of the revelation. A "true son of Nature and Fact," he alone, as Carlyle asserts, "is open to the divine significance." Hence, in Emerson's kindred view, "the politics of a higher region encompass him." Small wonder, then, that Davidson emits volcanic coruscations, using the "Veracities" and the "Immensities" to overset outworn creeds. Indeed, he is the Lollard of Naturalism, preaching a gospel of imperious self-assertion. For, God being abolished out of hand, the sole alternative throbs ceaselessly in personal desire, aspiration, passion. Physical and physiological processes are real for the very reason that they find meaning in the supremacy of self. The man unforbid serves himself *the* expression of the Absolute. His radiant freedom, revelling in the legitimate beauty of every lambent emotion, projects exuberance and independence amounting to proof positive. A fateful mission, a self-ordained privilege are his—to make all things new.

¹ *Fleet Street and Other Poems*, p. 102.

Disturbed by sense of impotence, goaded by troubrous dissatisfaction he may be; he has prospered mightily by casting out conviction of sin.

"... What men do when Time and Fate,
The rack and torture of the world have driven
Them mad, reveals their inmost attribute."¹

So far, the intellectual humanist, rejoicing in pagan pанcosmism, has spoken us fair. We have still to hear from the mystic poet. Is he equipped to articulate the colossal scheme? Not till poetry, scenting philosophy, flies out at the window; not till mysticism, forsaking the wings of the morning, inhabits the workaday world. Accordingly, we must rest content with rhapsodic indications, suggesting the natal universe symbolically, and imparted as it were by an occult faculty that recks nothing of reason, little of normal consciousness. So, too, despite bitterest defiance of all theologies, and sarcastic misprision of all philosophies, Davidson becomes an inverted subject of Calvin's irresistible grace. He would exorcise Protestant subjectivity by a personal despotism.

"Exceedingly tame is the devil, with all his forks and flaming stuff:
To be conscious and not omnipotent is more than torture enough."²

The spiritual Odyssey ends where it began. Throwing true from his forbears, our rhapsodist never wearies of the tale, that the teleological element betrays the open secret of the universe, and the end is—himself!

Having demolished the paternal temple, and hauled the rubbish, Davidson would fain rebuild upon the same site, and for the same purposes,—

¹ *The Testament of a Prime Minister*, p. 57.

² *The Last Ballad*, p. 24.

“an exile gnawed
Remorselessly by dogged memories.”¹

Moreover, he always undertakes these mighty works in the interest of principles, never because he loves his neighbour,—this hardness repelled Mr. W. B. Yeats, softened by the Celtic twilight.

“You touch me not. I, stretched upon the rack
Of consciousness, still curse. Woman and love?
I would be throned above
Humanity.”²

His somnambulist materialism is highly dramatic, at times magnificently effective; his dramas, on the contrary, evoke no persons. In short, greatly daring, he goes out into the infinite alone. Other recourse he had none.

II.

Once in a way it is a relief to be able to take an imaginative writer literally. “The autobiographies of all artists will be found in their works, in their pictures, their plays and poems, their sonatas and operas.”³ Be the generalisation as it may, Davidson was autobiographical here. His “plays and poems” and bits of his prose tell us all we need to know about him. Quite inevitably, critical judgment altogether aside, they fall into three periods. (1) From his maiden booklet, *The North Wall* (1885), to *The Great Men and A Practical Novelist* (1891), he is still the clever, irrepressible young Scot, rather wanton under the spell of new freedom. (2) From *Lady Ruthven's Widowhood* (1892), when collaboration with C. J. Wills, the physician-traveller, indicates

¹ *Self's the Man*, p. 216.

² *Fleet Street Eclogues*, p. 26.

³ Epilogue to *The Triumph of Mammon*, p. 163.

metropolitan affiliations, to *Godfrida—a Play* (1898), he is the latest recruit for the English Lyric, capable of a masterpiece; so London coteries judge.¹ (3) From *The Last Ballad* (1899) to *Fleet Street and Other Poems* (1909), the feeling grows upon him that

“One must become
Fanatic—be a wedge—a thunder-bolt,
To smite a passage through the close-grained world.”²

Indeed, after 1900, cosmogonic passion overwhelming him, the artist pales before the sombre prophet in travail. “The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. . . . I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazingstock. . . . I will break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder.” But, prophets are little less apt in mysticism than poets. And so, the mystic persisting, the poet cannot perish utterly. Despite the “burden” of an Amos, pressing “as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves,” the mystic attains “total and perfect possession of life at a high moment.” Like his earliest hero, the latest Davidson proves

“A handsome creature, but elliptical.”³

(1) Although his first formal publication bears the date 1885, those who met him in the middle seventies were aware that he was no novice even then. *In a Music Hall* preserves such adolescent stuff as he deemed worth salvage. It is reminiscent of Burns. The local flavour is plain, also the relative immaturity; lines written in his sixteenth year are here. He was twenty when he produced *An Unhistorical*

¹ See, for example, Mr. Le Gallienne in *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol. xxxv, p. 952 (1894), or H. D. Traill in *The Fortnightly Review*, Vol. lxiii, p. 407 (1895).

² *Smith*, Act I.

³ *Ibid.*

Pastoral: he celebrated his majority with *A Romantic Farce*. Both attest a youth of fair promise, who has absorbed Shakespeare well, not always wisely. *Bruce*, his best early drama, breaks a silence of six years and, ere long, the sardonic thinker heaves up. For *Smith* (1886), written at Crieff in the Perthshire highlands, is the really significant document of the first period. It offers the clue to the third. Nietzsche began to be bruited in England five years after his work was done. As usual, folk who knew him piecemeal forthwith pigeonholed disciples, Davidson among others. While it is true that he quoted Nietzsche more than once,¹ and paid respects to him in a few brief paragraphs,² I am unable to discover any definite reckoning with the eighteen tortured and torturing volumes. Indeed, I am quite dubious whether Davidson ever was in any position to master the Nietzsche canon;³ and, Nietzsche taken in homœopathic doses happens to be an effective receipt for philistinism, his *bête-noir* among human ills.⁴ On the other hand, seeds destined to fruit in the "Testaments" and the "Mammons" are nursing in *Smith*. Witness—

"You sots, you maggots, shavings, asteroids!
A million of you wouldn't make a man!
Out, or I'll strike you, monkeys, mannikins!"
(Act I)

¹ Cf. *The Testament of an Empire-BUILDER*, p. 36; *The Theatrorat*, p. 141.

² Cf. *Sentences and Paragraphs*, pp. 72-4, 82; *A Rosary*, pp. 66, 87. In the Epilogue to *The Triumph of Mammon* we have the familiar "gag" that Nietzsche was "mad."

³ It seems decisive that Davidson never had the technical command of philosophy necessary to interpretation of Nietzsche, and that, by his own confession, he could not read German (cf. *The Bookman* (New York), Vol. i, p. 86). Note, for example, the superficial remarks in the Dedication to *The Testament of John Davidson*, pp. 17 f.

⁴ Cf. my "Nietzsche—Traffics and Discoveries," *The Monist*, January, 1921.

"I am the enemy of all the world:
Dare it with me." (Act II)

"I am the man.
Why should we limit all the thought of this
Shrouding the Infinite with names?" (Act III)

and much else to the same "modern" effect. The truth is, Davidson never could be any man's camp-follower. Possibly, when distance lends perspective, he may rank (in his final period) as an Anglo-Celtic counterpart of Nietzsche in the neo-romantic renaissance. In any case, lapse of time cannot put German spectacles on him, much less expel his Scots Calvinism. Forgetful of Samuel Butler, one might as well enroll Mr. George Bernard Shaw among the "young Germans" whom Nietzsche hypnotised in the latest eighties. No! Davidson inherits from Carlyle (who sent him and his generation to available translations of Goethe), not to the exclusion of gifts from Ibsen.¹ The "modern" note is an echo from Scandinavia.

To return. The artistic achievement of the first period is *Scaramouch in Naxos*, which presages the lyrist, establishes the wit. At this point it is convenient to recall that, on the whole, the novels fail for the same reason as the dramas. *Perfervid* might claim exception in the one kind, *The Theatrorcrat* in the other. Yet, even in these, Davidson does not, or will not maintain the interest in persons essential to concrete realisation of character. Nor is he afraid to "tell the truth obliquely," in a pregnant comment upon one of his masters; a habit with him, as we shall see.

"Goethe wasn't an artist; he was a great man, who found a way for himself in the endeavour of his art: and I should say that the born æsthete might find himself in the endeavour to be a great man."²

¹ Cf. *A Rosary*, p. 164; Prologue to *Godfrida*, pp. 2 f.

² *A Rosary*, p. 163.

This is self-portraiture. Goethe's indifference to artistic perfection has few parallels. Davidson was like unto him. Both believed that personality alone avails. But the Hessian could draw the bow of Ulysses when the Scot was baffled by the eternal irony of it.

(2) In 1900, at the age of thirty-three, Davidson burned his bridges and, settling in London without means of support, set himself to win fame.

“Fame is the breath of power:
What valid work was ever for itself
Wrought solely? . . .
Give me to dream dreams all would love to dream;
To tell the world’s truth. . . .
How dare a man, appealing to the world,
Content himself with ten! How dare a man
Appeal to ten when all the world should hear!”¹

Like many a denizen of Grub Street from of old,

“A-scheming how to count ten bob a pound,”

he had much ado to scrape a bare livelihood. His main earnings came from *The Speaker*, then under the editorship of Wemyss Reid. He gives us several direct glimpses of the weary, toilsome struggle.² But the baleful heartbreak of it escapes him most poignantly when he comments upon a fellow-countryman, whose paradoxical victory in defeat under similar circumstances was prophetic of the destiny in store for too many of *The Yellow Book* circle. In a remark-

¹ *Smith*, Act I. It seems probable that Davidson was always more or less influenced by the nostalgia of Fame, hymned so aptly in this passage.

² Cf. *Sentences and Paragraphs*, pp. 86, 118; *Fleet Street Eclogues* (1st ed.), pp. 3 f., 20-22; *Ibid.*, Second Series, p. 33 f.; Introduction to *The Theatrocrat*, pp. 19 f.; Epilogue to *The Triumph of Mammon*, pp. 151 f.; Preface to *Fleet Street and Other Poems*.

able dialogue, reporting an imaginary conversation between Carlyle and Froude, a most Davidsonian "True Thomas" unburdens himself about the hapless author of *The City of Dreadful Night*.

"Thomson's poems will always command attention because they sprang directly out of life. I think that he was by Nature endowed beyond any of the English poets of his time. There are no half-measures with Nature when she really takes a matter in hand. And so she gave Thomson, let us say, passion and intellect second only to Shakespeare; fitted him for the fullest life—not that he might occupy and enjoy, however. Nature is the great spend-thrift. She will burn up the world some day to attain what will probably seem to us a very inadequate end; and in order to have things stated at their worst, once for all, in English, she took a splendid genius and made him—an Army school master; starved his intellect, starved his heart, starved his body. All the adversity in the world smote him; and that nothing should be wanting to her purpose, Nature took care that the very sun should smite him also."¹

It is a pertinent question whether Davidson detected another Thomson in himself.

Yet compensations abounded. It was something to be at the centre of things, to escape provincial curbs, to meet new associates who had "reached the goal,"² to have direct contact with larger opportunity, to receive encouragement from "free spirits."³ Nevertheless, Davidson needed the proverbial endurance of his people to sustain him. Be his dreams what they might, having entered the race late, his days brought hard labour, and he came to suspect with

¹ *The Man Forbid and Other Essays*, with an Introduction by Edward J. O'Brien, pp. 170 f. This "Tête-à-Tête" is the most significant essay in the volume. It has special importance as marking Davidson's roots in Carlyle rather than in Nietzsche. The influence of Thomson upon Davidson is probable; of George Gissing, highly probable; of Robert Buchanan, possible.

² *Sentences and Paragraphs*, p. 86.

³ Six poems appear in *The Yellow Book*, vols. i-v, and seven in *The Chap Book* (Chicago), vols. ii-vii.

George Gissing, that "to work for ever is to lose the half of life." The issue tore him two ways. Unable to fight poverty down, genius could save but a bare remnant for itself. Hence the Scot's inherent capacity for searching his own soul had too much to feed upon. Accordingly, although Davidson reaped his artistic best in the harvest of these years,

"The inner harmony, the very tune
Of Nature's heart,"¹

escaped him in the maze of his complex moods. To be frank, he seldom fused fact and imagination completely, never throughout the fabric of a longer poem. Holding Heine's ideal of an art "at once realistic and romantic," he left it where he found it—unrealised. "A Serenade, 1250 A.D.," "A Cinque Port," "In Romney Marsh," and short flights in the "Eclogues" (the poetic form that suited him best) are felicity itself. The ballads hardly justify their name; compare them with that real ballad of the later period, "A Runnable Stag." In short, soul-searching has its way and, despite marvellously happy touches, despite accurate observation of men and things and incidents, the insurgent hampers the artist. Nay, Davidson laboured his thought rather than his art. As earlier in *In a Music Hall*, so later, he continues to rely upon natural gift for versification, shirking the toil indispensable for effortless ease. Consequently, the very thought is neither bitted nor bridled. Once more, he offers an "oblique" diagnosis of his case.

"Self-control, as I understand it, is the keystone of genius; without it, you may have wonderful ruins, but no lofty bridges triumphantly spanning life. The terrible gifts of brain and blood slay the Titans—Mirabeau, Burns, Byron; the Gods, Shakespeare and Goethe, chain their intellects and temperaments."²

¹ *Ballads and Songs*, p. 34.

² *A Random Itinerary*, p. 177.

Davidson could neither use nor endure chains. The artist temperament is always there, but the intellect, too insistent, breeds anger and, at length, tragic bitterness. Nay, the inner strife being what it was, how could it be otherwise?

“To think and not be God?—
It cannot be. . . .
How vain. . . . A God, a mole, a worm!
. . . Such a God. . . .
Whose shoeless feet are rotting in the mire!”¹

“The terrible gifts of brain and blood” preclude quiet seasons of ease and reasonableness, to say nothing of ripe wisdom. And yet, they must not be rated by any common measure. For there may be sweet notes even in a challenge. Thus, to take an example, “A Ballad of Heaven,” though by no means the artistic masterpiece, affords admirable illustration of Davidson’s great qualities, shadowed by his provocative, if accountable defects. We see that the strange, even the terrible, may be beautiful, but not with unflecked loveliness. Capacity, curiosity, *élan* run to whims when astringent tractability lacks. Over and over again, one is profoundly moved by the pity of it. The two series of *Fleet Street Eclogues* and *Ballads and Songs* vibrate with vitality and passionate imaginativeness; so much so that, in their decade, Davidson forces us to grant him first rank along with Francis Thompson. Still, the possible achievement lags, thanks to a feverish rapidity, a panting riot of words. *Sturm und Drang* never laid, Davidson misses serenity and, too often, grace, his tenacious hold upon Nature and human nature notwithstanding. He takes us up into an exceeding high mountain for a divine moment and then, with a sudden rasping infelicity, jerks us to common earth. “The worm obscure in whose close coils I writhe”—a periphrasis for the doctrine of total depravity which cradled

¹ *Ballads and Songs*, pp. 22, 32-33.

him—haunts his Eden. So, he charms most when singing wantonly. But inbred memories return for judgment, with unstringing or overstringing effect. John Charteris, talker of great price, says "that books are best insured against oblivion through practice of the auctorial virtues of distinction and clarity, of beauty and symmetry, of tenderness and truth and urbanity."¹ Agree, and you must admit that Davidson lapsed freely. Not without amends, however. Kin to Charteris' second cousin, the far-flung Jurgen, Davidson could affirm: "I think there is something in me which will endure. . . . I am enfeebled by disastrous memories; and I am maimed by old follies. Still, I seem to detect in myself something which is permanent and rather fine."²

A native characteristic or a besetting sin—take it as you will—this mood haunted him from the first. At the last it hardens into decisive Titanism. The connoisseur of self, forsaking mere artistry as "too precise in every part," enrolls under the new-old banner dear to every pilgrim of the Infinite.

"For half a century I have survived in a world entirely unfitted for me, and having known both the Heaven and the Hell thereof, and being without revenue . . . I begin definitely . . . to destroy this unfit world and make it over again in my own image, because that cannot be transcended. . . . It is a new poetry I begin, *a new cosmogony*, a new habitation for the imagination of man."³

"This is the greatest thing told since the world began. . . . It means an end of the strangling past. . . . And that is the meaning of me."⁴

So early as February, 1897, a reviewer of *New Ballads* protested, in a friendly quarter,—"We do not want Mr. Davidson's moralizings, we prefer his lyrics."⁵ Possibly.

¹ *Beyond Life*, James Branch Cabell, p. 17.

² *Jurgen*, James Branch Cabell, p. 139 (1st ed.).

³ Epilogue to *The Triumph of Mammon*, pp. 152 f., 167.

⁴ *The Testament of John Davidson*, p. 31.

⁵ *The Chap Book* (Chicago), vol. vi, pp. 261 f.

But the balance, ever inclining one way, was to tip fatefully. The fuliginous spirit who "uses an armoury rather than a harp," ousted the singer. Foward ("no creed for me"); supremely self-confident ("I am a man apart"); perfervid with a sensuousness barely escaping carnality ("beholding Aphrodite"), Davidson set himself literally to tackle a cosmorama. If his fathers confessed sins, he would confound illusions. True to form, he supplies the customary "oblique" diagnosis of his case.

"A poet is always a man of inordinate ambition and of inordinate vanity. In his heart he says, 'I want my poetry to be remembered when Homer and Dante and Shakespeare are forgotten.' . . . Literature represents the deepest abysses of sensuality, the utmost detachment of spirit, the fiercest pride of intellect."¹

For better or for worse, Davidson had traffics and discoveries in all three, laying about him with scorpions the while. Hence, in the work of the last period, despite visions splendid, clothed upon with blank verse often resplendent, the coruscations of an incandescent ego blind us to authenticity. Even so, it were prudent not to avert the gaze too hastily. For, whatever the artistic lapse, this period may prove the most significant. Passage of time alone can tell. Meanwhile, I incline to believe that, the fathers having eaten sour grapes, this child's teeth were set on edge to some purpose. Before thirty, Davidson had acquired the ideas he was destined to elaborate after forty. After forty he found his niche, becoming *the* representative English neo-romantic. It may be well that, "perpetually going up and down between the Jerusalem of the artist and the Jericho of the rhetorician," he fell among thieves, to be stripped of æsthetic repute. It is certain that, being without technical equipment in theology, philosophy, and science, his thought ran

¹ *A Rosary*, pp. 210, 66. Cf. e.g., *Sentences and Paragraphs*, p. 119.

to irrelevant, occasionally vacuous rhapsody. Yet, with every deduction, the third period furnishes a human document impossible to overlook.

III.

(3) It were prudent to insist that a hoary question poses itself here; the root of the interminable quarrel between poetry and philosophy. There may be “a poetic view of the universe.” And yet, can any poet escape the seminal ideas governing religion and philosophical speculation, palpitating in the higher politics, or even in the unconscionable flurries of jingoism? Take the *dii majores*. Homer and Æschylus and Lucretius, Dante and Goethe and Wordsworth chorus an emphatic negative. As for Shakespeare, much depends on your approach—how far you forget or recollect the Renaissance, incarnate in the Bishop of St. Praxed’s Church. Perhaps Shelley affords the best touchstone.

“He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illume
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed nor see, what things they be;
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality!”¹

Nothing more can be said about the poet’s office. Here is the “imaginative faculty” given free course, and glorifying. If one rise to it with kindred imaginativeness, the world, like life, unveils a new dimension. Truth strikes home straight, because suffused with memorable beauty. But, what of “ultimate truth,” as Wordsworth phrased it? Let us venture to say, emotion is primary, meaning secondary;

¹ *Prometheus Unbound*, Act I. (*Fourth Spirit, ad fin.*).

we fix the one, and yet we cannot let the other take its chance merely. For, poetry "is autonomous expression meant to be contagious." In other words, man's vital experience furnishes the main theme. The region is that of emotional thought, and the communality of the thought lends verisimilitude to the medium emotionally charged by imagination. Selfhood must disappear, caught up by larger values and, returning, bestow a double revelation, at once individual and universal. The interplay between these two is endless alike in proportions and in kinds.

There are fine moments, especially in his second period, when Davidson contrives more or less complete fusion of the two, concealing his methods, a true artist. And, of course, these happy valiancies are never lost; witness "A Runnable Stag"¹; "St. Michael's Mount"; and the song, "Closes and courts and lanes."²

But, in the third period, a life-long *individual* problem carries him off. Concern for *the Truth* as an effluent from a "celestial Me,"—a gigantic person of heroic inspiration,—overset him. Emphasis upon the extreme, carelessness about the fine and, worse luck, a curious theory of poetry,³ loosed melodramatic tendencies. So, from the standpoint of æsthetic criticism, he pays the inevitable penalty. In search of "ultimate truth" under shapes which have *not* become part of the communality of thought, he is condemned not simply to bring back his treasures from the vasty deep, but to prove that, of a surety he has seen the infinite face to face, nay more, that he possesses a soul of the magnitude to undertake the tremendous deed. In the issue, like other neo-romantics—from Nietzsche *in excelsis* to D'Annunzio *in inferis*—he cannot choose but shriek. Strange passions, outlandish affairs, outrageous acts, overstrung rhetoric,—

¹ *Holiday and Other Poems*, p. 14.

² *Fleet Street and Other Poems*, pp. 120, 121.

³ Cf. *Holiday and Other Poems*, pp. 131 f.

anything calculated to impress the ordinary man with the actuality of the abnormal experiences,—are led in evidence. Personal conviction replaces both poetry and philosophy. To adapt Matthew Arnold, the dire need of one flouts the deepest emotional responses of the many. Manifestly, it is in order for your æsthetic critic to shout “Nietzschean balderdash,” and to pass by on the other side. Nevertheless, whatever the æsthetic decline, Davidson remains important here, for the paradoxical reason that he illustrates the insufficiency of having too much to tell. In so far as the “Testaments” and the “Mammons” exploit a mystic theory, they must rank with other literature of hypothesis, because they fail to embody direct æsthetic experience. On the other hand (and this is their importance), in so far as they envisage æsthetically a type of faith in present perfection by self-likening of the “natural man” to deity, they represent a vital factor in the spiritual tendencies of the age. For they record the vision captured by an artist as he attempts to escape the ancestral view that “conduct is three-fourths of life,” unconscious that its inevitable sense of failure has cast him upon the sole alternative—revolt. The theory is the “too-much” he tries to tell; the effort at personal reorientation, the matter of mark.

Here, then, is a man of talent nigh genius; beset by eager, some would say inordinate, ambition from youth; imbued with the “hero” idea of history, that subtle bond between Protestantism and Romanticism, descrying it afresh in the aims of Imperialism;¹ enjoying for a season fine moments of free personal expression, and achieving an audience notable more for discrimination than numbers. Yet he is at odds with his time, which could not integrate the new artist, because the dominant *laudator temporis acti* still judged D. G. Rossetti, William Morris, Christina Rossetti, and

¹ Cf. Dedication to *The Testament of John Davidson*, pp. 11 f.

(whisper it softly) even Matthew Arnold or Swinburne, minor poets! Moreover, although spurning ancestral Calvinism, he is convinced that there *is* "election" in Nature, and therefore unafraid to match his single strength against the entire order of the universe. What he seeks is a theology irresistible yet purely anthropological, imperative yet cleansed of puritanical prudery.

"Men are the Universe
 Aware at last, and must not live in fear. . . .
 Being the first to understand himself,
 I felt my life the universal will,
 My death more terrible than death. . . .
 For when I die the Universe shall cease
 To know itself."¹

As if this were not enough, another motive lurks behind Davidson's Titanism. With progressive decision, he grows conscious of a deep need for something which birth, training, and the sorry circumstances of life have withheld.

"No felicity
 Can spring in men, except from barbèd roots
 Of discontent and envy, deeply struck
 In some sore heart that hoped to have the flower."²

The provocation being thus extreme, the poet sets out to mend things altogether. Nevertheless, his grim negation is brightened, his savage defiance tempered by one unspent dream.

"I have had a vision of the soul of life,
 And love alone is worthy."

It were simplicity itself to "place" him among the bawdy lyrists of fleshly lust, whose prurient sophistication smells of

¹ *The Testament of John Davidson*, pp. 47, 50.

² Prologue to *Godiva*, pp. 2, 3.

moral nonentity. Simplicity! True, love and generation consort—for a purpose, however. Sex offers no master-key to Davidson's mysteries. Most emphatically, it is necessary to one end. Part of the whole, its frequent recurrence, even urgency, betokens no erotic fiddle-faddle. It happens to be a factor in the transcendental cosmic scheme, essential to resolution of the inherent conflict. The ego must needs go naked, not as an ego, but as the subject of a coercive obligation.

"My womb will teem with . . . many sons
As great as he whose love, so deified,
Will found a mightier dynasty of gods
Than any in the records of all the heavens."¹

Coarse, unpleasant, even brutal, Davidson can be; there is no smirking at the eternal harlot. Omnisufficient, he had no call to chatter at the Philistines from a pigsty. Excess of light blinds him to many uses of modesty. Frightful to the point of aberration, he is not nasty. The magic of imagination saves him from rotten ripeness, even when most pathetically unaware that a philosophy such as his cannot base upon physiological naturalism and prosper. In this as in other matters, his blunders cause us to gnash our teeth. But they are blunders, never scarlet sins. "The lust of the goat is the bounty of God. The wrath of the lion is the wisdom of God. The nakedness of woman is the work of God. . . . Improvement makes straight roads; but the crooked roads without improvement are roads of Genius."²

For all his imaginative licence, his riant temperament and delight in the sensuous, Davidson was obsessed by a theory of the universe, designed to replace "moribund" Christianity.

¹ *The Testament of John Davidson*, p. 129.

² *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake, pp. 250 f. (Oxford ed., 1914).

He may protest, "I was never a Morisonian";¹ literally true, this serves to show that he had not fathomed himself. A theurgic atmosphere saturated him from birth. At once repelled and driven, he would create a new eschatological earth where he might find salvation, even as his fathers.

The romantic movement, beginning with sentimental self-pity in the days of the *Geniezeit*, swung over to historicism in Carlyle, Ruskin and others. This phase reached its zenith in Newman, who submerged the individual. Men may wax, being heirs of all the ages; they wane, being prisoners of the past. Who is anyone that he dare cast his petty self athwart universal judgment fortified by the trial and error of generations? Such was the question of the Counter-Revolution. The *air vif, ardent, et fou* had indeed fled and, with it, the doctrine that "the world is the abode of the strong." New strength there might be, evoked from masses; and the natural born aristocrat could but withdraw into some lonely palace of art.

At length, after much weariness, the weariness of intellectual accumulation and of mechanical toil, a third phase burst forth, Whitman's "Answerer" leading on.

"A call in the midst of the crowd,
My own voice, rotund sweeping and final. . . .

I know perfectly well my own egotism,
Know my omnivorous lines and must not write any less. . . .
The past and the present wilt—I have fill'd them, emptied
them,
And proceed to fill my next fold of the future."²

The awesome vastness of the physical universe revealed by science, the drab human regimentation effected by industry

¹ In a letter to Mr. A. S. Mories, of date August 28, 1907; cf. *Westminster Review*, July, 1913, p. 83.

² *Song of Myself*.

must be exorcised. The clamant question was, What ideas may mankind adopt and foster now? Nietzsche in his order, Davidson in his, preached the saving faith independently. Old notions must undergo dissociation, many norms must be cast into the discard; new notions must prevail and, with them, transvaluating values. The lone man, sure of his insight, can reduce the mass to impotence by revealing its follies. The world may be quite awry, but illimitable faith in self finds guerdon in illimitable faith in a spiritual future, provided man have courage to be his own deity. So Romanticism comes full circle. For, imagination having ousted thought, it followed that contemplating a scheme may be better than applying it. Wide as are their differences otherwise, Nietzsche and Davidson agree completely here.¹

Surcharged with sensibility, righteous indignation against the present order impelling, Davidson forgot that formal doctrine cannot convey emotional experience. He deemed himself the herald angel of perfection; he *had* passed "beyond good and bad." This insolent faith rendered him wayward. Hence, Blake was his real brother according to the spirit. Both hated the Hebrew (puritan) god for a killjoy; both lost themselves artistically in theosophical converse with "the Eternals"; both insisted

"I must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Man's;
I will not Reason and Compare; my business is to Create,"²
and so both were bound to say,

"Go to the Fiends of Righteousness
Tell them to obey their Humanities, and not pretend Holiness."³

¹ For the rest, he is much more Feuerbach's than Nietzsche's kinsman.

² Blake, *loc. cit.*, p. 387.

³ Blake, *ibid.*, p. 407.

Both were savagely antinomian "and of the Devil's party."¹ Later in time than his forerunner, Davidson, complete master of an egocentric universe, fell upon the errors of anticlimax, flouting his own maxim, "We must carefully distinguish between the absence of tact and the presence of principle."² Accordingly, despite wonderful blank verse, often managed wonderfully, he paid the penalty in full. Great poetry always reverts to the artless, almost naïve, preoccupations which have held man down the ages. Massive in their simplicity, these mandates nevertheless burgeon with intimation. Being universal, they suggest "forms more real than living men." In his happier moments, Davidson knew this as well as Shelley, only to lapse, that he might assuage peculiar personal and temporary difficulties. Hence, his high seriousness was labelled wilful resentment, his forthright passion eccentricity, his art "arrested poetry." As Blake said, "The Enquiry in England is not whether a Man has Talents and Genius, but whether he is Passive and Polite and a Virtuous Ass."³ And yet, for Davidson as for Blake, Wordsworth's comment may well hold a prophecy. "There is no doubt this poor man was mad, but there is something in the madness of this man which interests me more than the sanity of Lord Byron and Walter Scott." Mindful of this "something," we have long since relegated Blake's "madness" to the limbo of stupidity. When Davidson comes to be discovered, when competent appreciation shall have distinguished between his "private intention" and his "public meaning," he may achieve similar esteem. Some of his lines hold a secure place in the great succession of English poetry. But, taking his work as a whole, he may never be acknowledged a classic; "the decadent is an experimenter who fails." On the other hand, it seems probable that he

¹ Blake, *ibid.*, p. 249.

² *Sentences and Paragraphs*, p. 13.

³ Cf. Blake, *ibid.*, pp. 198 f.

caught cogent symptoms presaging classics still to come. The end is not yet. As I have said, time alone can tell. In any case, it is certain that he remains, challenging overdue attention, and courageous estimate. For, after all, he confronted the urgent question, Can Art reduce the intolerable claims of Nature, intensified, as they seem to be, by man's frailty and folly? And, admitting that his intellect drew him one way, his heart another, with resultant despair, ecstatic bravery marked his attempt to subdue chaos.

R. M. WENLEY.

EARLIER POEMS

BRUCE'S SOLILOQUY

I'M not a man

Much given to meditate. When pending thoughts
Hurtle each other in the intellect,
Darkening that firmament like thunder-clouds,
To let them lighten forth in utterance
Clears up the sky, confused with swaying rack.
My life begins a new departure here;
And like one dying all my time appears
Even on the instant, in eternal light.
Ambition struck the hours that measured it.
My pact with Comyn was half-hearted. What!
The passion that laid hold upon my soul
When he was killed— When he was killed? I think
I'm to myself too merciful; but yet
I seemed to do some bidding:—were there not
Alloys of gladness that the bond was loosed,
Of jealousy that Comyn barred my way,
Mixed in the blow that paid the traitor's wage?
There are two voices whispering in my ear:
This is the bane of self-communion. Now,
Right in my teeth, or in my toothless chaps,
I swear, antiquity, first thoughts are best:
Their treble notes I still shall hearken to,
And let no second, murmuring soft, seduce
Their clear and forthright meaning. It is gone,
The flash of revelation: dallying does
With intuition as with other chance.
I would to God that I might ever hear

DAVIDSON'S POEMS

The drum of doom pealing along the sky,
And know that every common neighbour day
Is the last day, and so live on and fight
In presence of the judgment. Wishing this
Have I not broached the very heart of truth?
Each unmarked moment is an end of time,
And this begins the future.

SELECTIONS FROM "SMITH"

(1)

Jones. "I'm done with it," he cried. "These squalid years
Of mental boot-blacking are ended now—
The shameful pedagogy. Ah," he said,
With lips that shook and molten eyes, his voice
Hushing and sparkling as his passion tore
A ragged way through wordy wildernesses,
Or spread, when image failed, in shallows vague,
The margin lost in rushy verbiage,
"Shameful! a devil's compact! I, for food
Have made myself a grindstone, edging souls
Meant most for flying: I, in piteous mouths,
That yearned for sweetest manna, crammed
rough stones
And loathsome scorpions: children, youths, the
light
Of God brought newly down by love,
Straining to shine on all the flowers of earth,
Of heaven, of poetry, have I swathed up
In noisome fog of the dead letter—I,
Who dare aspire to be a child for ever.
Intolerance in religion never dreamt

Such fell machinery of Acts and Codes
 As we now use for nipping thought in bud,
 And turning children out like nine-pins, each
 As doleful and as wooden. Never more
 Shall I put hand to such inhuman work!"
 To come with this to me, who teach, and mean
 To start a boarding-school next year!

Brown.

By Jove!

The net result of solitude. This world,
 This oyster with its valves of toil and play,
 Would round his corners for its own good ease,
 And make a pearl of him if he'd plunge in. . . .

Smith.

Pearls! This is what you are:

The commonest type of biped crawling here.
 Take it thus crudely: you would not believe
 A subtle phrase in full, but think I meant
 Less than the words might bear, deeming me
 dull—

Barbarian you call me. . . .
 You sots, you maggots, shavings, asteroids!
 A million of you wouldn't make a man!
 Out, or I'll strike you, monkeys, mannikins!

(2)

Hallowes.

I shall make poetry—a line a day,
 If nothing more. I'm twenty: I may count
 On ten years yet. Three thousand lines, each
 line

A very mountain from whose sun-gilt crest
 The stormy world a peaceful picture seems.
 I shall upheave and range a chain like this:
 Realms shall rejoice in it: my fame shall grow
 For ever like the sward.

Smith. Let fame alone.
Hallowes. You misconceive: fame is the breath of power:
 What valid work was ever for itself
 Wrought solely, be it war, art, statesmanship?
 Nothing can be its own reward and hold
 Rank above patience, or whatever game,
 Angling or avarice, is selfisher. . . .
 Give me to dream dreams all would love to
 dream;
 To tell the world's truth; hear the world tramp
 time
 With satin slippers and with hob-nailed shoes
 To my true singing: fame is worth its cost,
 Blood-sweats, and tears, and haggard, homeless
 lives.
 How dare a man, appealing to the world,
 Content himself with ten! How dare a man
 Appeal to ten when all the world should hear!
 How dare a man conceive himself as else
 Than his own fool without the world's hurrah
 To echo him!

Smith. But if the world won't shout
 Till he be dead?

Hallowes. Let him address the street:
 No subtle essences, ethereal tones
 For senses sick, bed-ridden in the down
 Of culture and its stifling curtains. Gusts
 From bean-fields and the pine-woods, thought
 and deed
 Of the young world bursting its swaddling bands
 Before the upturned eyes and warning palms
 Of fangless Use and Wont, his nurses hoar—
 These find an echo everywhere. . . .

Smith. Well said! We'll go together to the North.

Hallowes. What! Are you free?
Smith. I am. You want to write:
 I want to think. When shall we start?
Hallowes. To-morrow.
Smith. So soon! But you are right: one must become
 Fanatic—be a wedge—a thunder-bolt,
 To smite a passage through the close-grained
 world.

(3)

Smith. Our language is too worn, too much abused,
 Jaded and over-spurred, wind-broken, lame,—
 The hackneyed roadster every bagman mounts.
 I cannot tell you what I want with you,
 Unless you understand the depth of this:
 I want you for heroic happiness. . . .
 Be mine:
 I am the enemy of all the world:
 Dare it with me: be mine. . . .
 Think my thought; be impatient as I am;
 Obey your nature, not authority:
 Because the world, enchanted by the sun,
 The moon, the stars, with charms of time and
 space,
 Of seasons, tides, of darkness and of light,
 Weaves new enchantment everlasting,
 Whirled in a double spell of day and year,
 A self-deluded sorcerer, winding round,
 Close to its smothered heart, coil after coil
 Of magic zones, invisible as air—
 Some, Cytherean belts; some, chains; and some,
 Noisome and terrible as hooded snakes.
Magdalen. What do you mean? what spells? what sorcery?
Smith. The hydra-headed creeds; the sciences,

That deem the thing is known when it is named;
 And literature, thought's prison-palace fair;
 Philosophy, the grand inquisitor
 That racks ideas and is fooled with lies;
 Society, the mud wherein we stand
 Up to the eyes, whence if I drag you forth,
 Saving your soul and mine, there shall ascend
 A poisonous blast that may o'ertake our lives.

IV

Hallowes. O noblest hour in my ignoble life!
 Hunger and squalor, and delirious rhymes;
 No past, no future; one unending now
 Of meanest misery, most miserable
 When fairest dreams gilded the starless night,
 And words in choirs flew singing through my
 brain
 Melodious thunder, for then most I knew
 The yawning wants and gnawing cares of life.
 To sink to that inanity abhorred,
 The wretch, whose early fervour, burnt away,
 Leaves him, for lack of ease to smite his thought
 To white-heat—since brazier of youth,
 That needs no sweat, is cold—incapable
 Of any meaning, but with loathsome itch
 That still essays, and still produces nought,
 Or horribly emits untempered scraps—
 Toads, cinders, snakes, nameless aborted
 things,—
 The hideous castings witchcraft vomited;
 Maybe to live on grudging charity
 Of friends estranged; sneered at by smug suc-
 cess;
 Called poetaster: such had been my life;

But I have chosen death. Death—and the moon

Hangs low and broad upon the eastern verge
Above a mist that floods the orient,
Filling the deep ravines and shallow vales,
Lake-like and wan, embossed with crested isles
Of pine and birch. Death—and the drops of day

Still stain the west a faintest tinge of rose
The stars cannot o'erwash with innocence.

Death—and the mountain-tops, peak after peak,

Lie close and dark beneath Orion's sword.

Death—and the houses nestle at my feet,
With ruddy human windows here and there
Piercing the velvet shade—deep in the world,
Old hedge-rows and sweet by-paths through the corn!

The river like a sleepless eye looks up.

Pale shafts of smoke ascend from homely hearths,

And fade in middle air like happy sighs.

Death—and the wind blows chill across my face:

The thin, long hoary grass waves at my side
With muffled tinkling. . . . Not yet! No; my life

Has not ebbed all away: I want to live
A little while. . . . Is the moon gone so soon?
They've put the shutters to down there. . . .

The wind

Is warm. . . . Death—is it death? . . . I had no chance. . . .

Perhaps I'll have another where I go. . . .
Another chance. . . . How black! . . .

SONG OF BACCHANTES AND SATYRS

DANCE and sing, we are eternal;
Let us still be mad with drinking:
'Tis a madness less infernal
Than the madness caused by thinking.

Death, cease whetting missiles for us;
Lurk not in the grave's dark portal;
Bring your dead, and join the chorus;
Drink, for we are all immortal.

Drink, my gallants; reel and rhyme;
Though our souls are second-rate
We are none the less sublime:
Drink, and give the lie to fate!

ANNIE SMITH

WHERE have you been to-day, Annie Smith,
Where have you been to-day?
By the shore where the river becomes a frith?
Or up on the hills away,

By purple heather and saffron broom,
Like clouds at the sunset hour,
And all the well-kent flowers that bloom
In each breezy hillside bower?

Were you there, Annie Smith, that your face is so gay
And your eyes so laughing and blue?
Was it there that you spent the whole of the day?

Or, tell me, darling, were you
In the leafy wood where the grass grows thick
With the fairies at their play?
Did you flirt with Oberon, dance with Puck,
That your face, Annie Smith, is so gay?

Where have you been to-day, Annie Smith,
That you smile so gaily on me?
By the shore where the river becomes a frith?
Or were you upon the sea?
Did you sail in a pearly shell, Annie Smith,
With your hair flying free?
Did your laughing blue eyes tell, Annie Smith,
Such a happy tale of the sea?
Or were you down in the caves, Annie Smith,
With the mermaids under the sea?
Did the mermen beneath the waves, Annie Smith,
Try to catch you and keep you from me?
Or did you fly through the air all the day?
Did you frolic with the wind?
Did you dine with the man in the moon, I pray,
That your face and your eyes are so laughing and gay?
Come, Annie, Annie, be quick and say
Where you have been the whole of the day,
In your body or in your mind?

THE GLEEMAN

THE gleeman sang in the market-town;
The market-folk went up and down.

His blue eyes waned when thronging thought
Would not obey as visions ought;

Then flashed and flung their radiance straight—
Availing prayer—at heaven's gate;
And thought and word chimed with the tune.
His scarlet cloak and sandal shoon,
His tunic with the silver fur,
Of forest green and miniver,
His golden brooch and carcanet,
Was not the garb that gleemen get.
So said the dames; the dreamy girls
Gazed only on his golden curls;
The sapless ancients sneered and frowned;
The young men with a spell were bound,
And eyed his gleaming, studded belt,
The scabbard and the jewelled hilt.

But no one praised the harp of gold
 His fingers deftly rang,
Or listened to the things he told;
 But this is what he sang:

“Loose your knotted brains awhile,
 Market-people, sore bestead;
Traffic palsies all your isle;
 Hear a message from the dead.

“Though the sultry flood of life
 Brims my veins; though starry truth
Still maintains a changing strife
 With the purple dreams of youth;

“Songs the master-makers wrought—
 Who are now the guests of death,
Lulled by echoes of their thought—
 Fill me with their eager breath.

“What! You stare with horny eyes,
 And my singing robes you scan?
 You would make my sword your prize?
 Maidens only see the man?

“Learnèd clerk with icy sneer,
 Must I strike a lower clef?
 Hear, O heaven, and earth, give ear,
 I will sing though men be deaf!

“And the throbbing sky shall list,
 And the rivers cease to bound,
 Startled mountains pierce the mist,
 Happy valleys drink the sound.

“Earth is fairer than we know:
 Shining hours and golden beams!
 Lilies sigh, and roses glow,
 And the beasts have noble dreams.

“Lo! the youngest soul is scarred,
 Blanched with tears and dyed with stains,
 For the world is evil-starred,
 But the vision still remains:

“Plenty from her bounteous horn,
 Dealing bread instead of stones;
 Golden lands of nodding corn
 Lusty labour reaps and owns;

“Fearless suns, and no sick star,
 No more maiden moons ashamed,
 Cities sweet as forests are,
 Sin unthought, unknown, unnamed;

“Babes that wail not in the night,
Wretched heirs of poisoned lives;
No young souls that long for light,
Festerling in scholastic gyves;

“Not a damsel made the tomb
Of a thousand loves unchaste;
Woman mistress of her womb,
Never bound to be embraced;

“Man by hunger unsubdued,
Conqueror of the primal curse,
Master of his subtlest mood,
Master of the universe.”

He wrapped his cloak about his face,
And left the bustling market-place.
The juggler had an audience,
The mountebank drew showers of pence,
The pardoner cheapened heaven for gold:
I ween the market-folk were sold.

NOCTURNE

THE wind is astir in the town;
It wanders the street like a ghost
In a catacomb's labyrinth lost,
Seeking a path to the heath.
Broad lightnings stream silently down
On the silent city beneath.
But haunting my ear is the tune
Of the larks as they bathe in the light;
And I have a vision of noon

Like a fresco limned in the night:
I see a green crescent of trees;
A slope of ripe wheat is its foil,
The cream of the sap of the soil,
Curdling, but sweet, in the breeze.
The sun hastes, and evening longs
For the moon to follow after;
And my thought has the tenderest scope:
Tears that are happy as laughter,
Sighs that are sweeter than songs,
Memories dearer than hope.

POETRY OF THE “NINETIES”

ECLOGUE

(QUEEN ELIZABETH'S DAY)

BUT God has no machine
For punching perfect worlds from cakes of chaos.

He works but as He can;
God is an artist, not an artisan.
Darkly imagining,
With ice and fire and storm,
With floods and earthquake-shocks
He gave our sphere its form.
The meaning of His work
Grew as He wrought.
In creases of the mud, in cooling rocks
He saw ideas lurk—
Mountains and streams.
Of life the passionate thought
Haunted His dreams.
At last He tried to do
The thing He dreamt.
With plasm in throbbing motes,
With moss and ferns and giant beasts unkempt
He laboured long, until at length He seemed
To breathe out being. Flowers and forests grew
Like magic at His word: mountain and plain,
Jungle and sea and waste,
With miracles of strength and beauty teemed:
In every drop and every grain,

Each speck and stain,
Was some new being placed,
Minute or viewless. Then was He aghast,
And all His passion to create grew tame;
For life battened on life. He thought
To shatter all; but in a space
He loved His work again and sought
To crown it with a sovereign grace;
And soon the great idea came.

"If I could give my work a mind;
If I could make it comprehend
How wondrously it is designed;
Enable it with head and heart
To mould itself to some accomplished end—
That were indeed transcendent art."

Trembling with ecstasy He then made man,
To be the world's atonement and its prince.
And in the world God has done nothing since:
He keeps not tinkering at a finished plan;
He is an artist, not an artisan.

A BALLAD IN BLANK VERSE OF THE MAKING OF A POET

HIS father's house looked out across a firth
Broad-bosomed like a mere, beside a town
Far in the North, where Time could take his ease,
And Change hold holiday; where Old and New
Weltered upon the border of the world.

"Oh, now," he thought—a youth whose sultry eyes,
Bold brow and wanton mouth were not all lust,
But haunted from within and from without

POETRY OF THE "NINETIES"

By memories, visions, hopes, divine desires—
“Now may my life beat out upon this shore
A prouder music than the winds and waves
Can compass in their haughtiest moods. I need
No world more spacious than the region here:
The foam-embroidered firth, a purple path
For argosies that still on pinions speed,
Or fiery-hearted cleave with iron limbs
And bows precipitous the pliant sea;
The sloping shores that fringe the velvet tides
With heavy bullion and with golden lace
Of restless pebble woven and fine spun sand;
The villages that sleep the winter through,
And, wakening with the spring, keep festival
All summer and all autumn: this grey town
That pipes the morning up before the lark
With shrieking steam, and from a hundred stalks
Lacquers the sooty sky; where hammers clang
On iron hulls, and cranes in harbours creak,
Rattle and swing, whole cargoes on their necks;
Where men sweat gold that others hoard or spend,
And lurk like vermin in their narrow streets:
This old grey town, this firth, the further strand
Spangled with hamlets, and the wooded steeps,
Whose rocky tops behind each other press,
Fantastically carved like antique helms
High-hung in heaven’s cloudy armoury,
Is world enough for me. Here daily dawn
Burns through the smoky east; with fire-shod feet
The sun treads heaven, and steps from hill to hill
Downward before the night that still pursues
His crimson wake; here winter plies his craft,
Soldering the years with ice; here spring appears,
Caught in a leafless brake, her garland torn,
Breathless with wonder, and the tears half-dried

Upon her rosy cheek; here summer comes
And wastes his passion like a prodigal
Right royally; and here her golden gains
Free-handed as a harlot autumn spends;
And here are men to know, women to love.”

His father, woman-hearted, great of soul,
Wilful and proud, save for one little shrine
That held a pinch-beck cross, had closed and barred
The many mansions of his intellect.

“My son,” he said—to him, fresh from his firth
And dreams at evening; while his mother sat,
She also with her dingy crucifix
And feeble rushlight, praying for her boy—
“My son, have you decided for the Lord?
Your mother’s heart and mine are exercised
For your salvation. Will you turn to Christ?
Now, young and strong, you hanker for the world;
But think: the longest life must end at last,
And then come Death and Judgment. Are you fit
To meet your God before the great white throne?
If on the instant Death should summon you,
What doom would the Eternal Judge pronounce—
‘Depart from me,’ or ‘Sit on My right hand’?
In life it is your privilege to choose,
But after death you have no choice at all.
Die unbelieving, and in endless woe
You must believe throughout eternity.
My son, reject not Christ; he pleads through me;
The Holy Spirit uses my poor words.
How it would fill your mother’s heart and mine,
And God’s great heart with joy unspeakable,
Were you, a helpless sinner, now to cry,
‘Lord I believe: help Thou mine unbelief.’”

He clenched his teeth; his blood, fulfilled of brine,
Of sunset, and his dreams, boomed in his ears.
A vision rose before him; and the sound
Husky and plaintive of his father's voice
Seemed unintelligible and afar.

He saw Apollo on the Dardan beach:
The waves lay still; the winds hung motionless,
And held their breath to hear the rebel god,
Conquered and doomed, with stormy sobbing song,
And crashing discords of his golden lyre,
Reluctantly compel the walls of Troy,
Unquarried and unhewn, in supple lines
And massive strength to rise about the town.

A quavering voice shattered his fantasy:
His father's pleading done, his mother cried,
With twitching forehead, scalding tears that broke
The seal of wrinkled eyelids, mortised hands
Where knuckles jutted white: "Almighty God!—
Almighty God!—Oh, save my foolish boy."

He glanced about the dreary parlour, clenched
His teeth, and once again his blood, fulfilled
Of brine, of sunset, and his dreams, exhaled
A vision. While his parents clutched their hearts,
Expecting his conversion instantly,
And listened if perchance they might o'erhear
The silent heavens burst into applause
Over one lost repentant, he beheld
The Cyprian Aphrodite, all one blush
And glance of passion, from the violet sea
Step inland, fastening as she went her zone.
She reached a gulf that opened in the ground
Deep in a leafless wood and waited there,
Battling the darkness with her wistful eyes.

Then suddenly she blanched and blushed again,
And her divinely pulsing body bowed
With outstretched arms over the yawning earth.
Straightway Adonis, wonderstruck and pale,
Stole from the sepulchre, a moonbeam wraith.
But Aphrodite with a golden cry
That echoed round the world and shook the stars,
Caught him and thawed him in her warm embrace,
And murmuring kisses bore him to her bower.
Then all the trees were lit with budding flames
Of emerald, and all the meads and leas,
Coverts and shady places, glades and dells,
Odoured and dimly stained with opening flowers,
And loud with love-songs of impassioned birds,
Became the shrine and hostel of the spring.

His wanton face grew sweet and wonderful,
Beholding Aphrodite. But they thought—
His father and his mother, sick with hope—
It was the Holy Ghost's effectual call.
Entranced he rose and glided from the room;
They, undevceived, like little children sobbed.

Slowly he broke his mother's tender heart,
Until she died in anguish for his sins.
His father then besought him on his knees,
With tears and broken speech and pleading hands.

"My son," he said, "you open all the wounds
Daily and nightly of the Lord of Heaven:
You killed your mother, you are killing me:
Is it not sin enough, poor foolish boy?"

For this was in the North, where Time stands still
And Change holds holiday, where Old and New

Welter upon the border of the world,
And savage faith works woe.

"Oh, let me be!"

The dreamer cried, and rushing from the house
He sought the outcast Aphrodite, dull,
Tawdry, unbeautiful, but still divine
Even in the dark streets of a noisome port.

At times he wrote his dreams, rebellious still
That he should be constrained to please himself
As one is eased by roaring on the rack.

Desperate he grew, and wandering by his firth,
Exclaimed against the literature he loved.

"Lies, lies!" he muttered. "And the noblest, lies!
Why should we lie? what penalty is this—
To write, and sing, and think, and speculate,
Hag-ridden by ideas, or 'twixt the shafts
Like broken horses, blinded, bitted, reined,
And whipped about the world by steel-tagged creeds!"

Wasted and sad with wantonness, and wan
With fantasy—a furnace seven times hot,
Wherein he tried all things; and wrung with woe
To see his father dying for his sake,
And by the memory of his mother's death
He yielded tamely and professed himself
Convinced of sin but confident in Christ.

Then to the table of the Lord he went,
Ghastly, with haunted eyes that shone, and limbs
That scarcely bore him, like a heretic
Led to the chamber where tormentors stood
Muffled and silent, earnest to explore,
With cunning flames and cords and engines dire,

The sunken wells of pain, the gloomy gulfs
Obscurely wallowing in the souls of men.

In solemn tones the grey-haired presbyter—
“This is My body which is given for you,
This do in memory of Me.”

The boy,

Whose blood within him clamoured like a storm,
Uttered a smothered cry and rose, but lo!
The happy triumph on his father's face!
“Why do I not die now? like husks of corn,
The bread, like vitriol the sip of wine!
I eat and drink damnation to myself
To give my father's troubled spirit peace.”
The stealthy elders creaked about the floor,
Guiding the cup and platter; looking down,
The children in the gallery smirked and watched
Who took the deepest draught; and ancient dames
Crumpled their folded handkerchiefs, and pressed
With knuckly fingers sprays of southernwood.

Ah! down no silver beam the Holy Grail
Glided from Heaven, a crimson cup that throbbed
As throbs the heart divine; no aching sounds
Of scarce-heard music stole into the aisle,
Like disembodied pulses beating love.

But in the evening by the purple firth
He walked, and saw brown locks upon the brine,
And pale hands beckon him to come away,
Where mermaids, with their harps and golden combs,
Sit throned upon the carven antique poops
Of treasure-ships, and soft sea-dirges sing
Over the green-gilt bones of mariners.

He saw vast forms and dreadful draw aside
 The flowing crimson curtains of the west
 With far-off thundrous rustle, and threaten him
 From heaven's porch; beneath his feet the earth
 Quaked like a flame-sapped bridge that spans the wave
 Of fiery Phlegethon; and in the wind
 An icy voice was borne from some waste place,
 Piercing him to the marrow. Night came down,
 And still he wandered helpless by the firth,
 That under clouded skies gleamed black and smooth
 Like cooling pitch. But when the moon broke out
 And poured athwart the glittering ebony
 Torrents of molten silver, hurtling thoughts
 Trooped forth disorderly.

"I'll have no creed,"

He said. "Though I be weakest of my kind,
 I'll have no creed. Lo! there is but one creed,
 The vulture-phoenix that for ever tears
 The soul of man in chains of flesh and blood
 Rivetted to the earth; the clime, the time,
 Change but its plumage. Gluttonous bird of prey,
 More fatal than all famines, plagues and wars,
 I wrench you off, although my soul go too!
 With bloody claws and dripping beak unfleshed,
 Spread out your crackling vans that darken heaven;
 Rabid and curst, fly yelping where you list!
 Henceforth I shall be God; for consciousness
 Is God: I suffer; I am God: this Self,
 That all the universe combines to quell,
 Is greater than the universe; and *I*
 Am that I am. To think and not be God?—
 It cannot be! Lo! I shall spread this news,
 And gather to myself a band of Gods—
 An army, and go forth against the world,

Conquering and to conquer. Snowy steppes
Of Muscovy, frost-bound Siberian plains,
And scalding sands of Ethiopia,
Where groans oppress the bosom of the wind,
And men in gangs are driven to icy graves,
Or lashed to brutish slavery under suns
Whose sheer beams scorch and flay like burning blades
Shall ring, enfranchised, with divine delight.
At home, where millions mope, in labyrinths
Of hideous streets astray without a clue,
Unfed, unsexed, unsouled, unhelped, I bring
Life, with the gospel, 'Up, quit you like Gods!' ”

Possessed with this, upon his father's hour
Of new-found happiness he burst, and cried,
“Father, my father, I have news to tell!
I know the word that shall uproot the thrones
Of oldest monarchs, and for ever lay
The doting phantom with the triple crown:
A word dynamic with the power of doom
To blast conventicles and parliaments,
Unsolder federations, crumble states,
And in the fining pot cast continents.
A word that shall a new beginning be,
And out of chaos make the world again.
Behold, my father! we, who heretofore,
Fearful and weak, deep-dyed in Stygian creeds
Against the shafts of pain and woe, have walked
The throbbing earth, most vulnerable still
In every pore and nerve: we, trembling things,
Who but an hour ago in frantic dread
Burned palsied women, and with awe beheld
A shaven pate mutter a Latin spell
Over a biscuit: we, even we, are Gods!
Nothing beneath, about us, or above

Is higher than ourselves. Henceforth degree,
Authority, religion, government,
Employer and employed are obsolete
As penal torture or astrology.
The mighty spirit of the universe,
Conscious in us, shall" . . .

Suddenly aware

Of gaping horror on his father's face,
He paused; and he, the old man, white as death,
With eyes like stars upon the crack of doom,
Rose quaking; and "The unpardonable sin!—
The unpardonable sin!" he whispered hoarse.
"This was the sin of Lucifer—to make
Himself God's equal. If I may, my son—
If it be God's will, I shall go to hell
To be beside you. I shall be there first:
I have not many hours to live. I thought—
Here as I sat beside your mother's chair—
I—my boy!—I wander somewhat. Let me—
I'll sit again.—Let me remember now
How happy I have been to-day, my son
A member of the Church of Christ, and I
Beside him at Communion, seeing him
And seeing at the window of heaven the face
Of her who bore him, sweet and glorified.
At home I sit and think that, as he lived
Most absolute in sin, he shall, like Paul
Be as insatiable in doing well.
I think how, when my time comes, I shall go
And tell his mother of his holy life
Of labour for the Lord; and then I see
My boy at last appear before the Throne.
'By what right com'st thou here?' the Judge demands.
He hangs his head; but round about him throng

A crowd of souls, who cry 'He was our staff;
He led us here.' 'Sit thou on My right hand,'
The sentence falls; and we, my wife and I,
Awaiting you. . . . There came a devil in
Wearing the likeness of my boy, and said
He was predestined for a reprobate,
A special vessel of the wrath of God.
Holy he was begotten; holy born;
With tearful prayers attended all his life;
Cherished with scrupulous love, and shown the path
To heaven by her who ne'er shall see him there;
For out of this there comes but blasphemy
And everlasting Hell. . . . Ah! who are these?
My soul is hustled by a multitude
Of wild-eyed prodigals and wrenched about.
Boy, help me to blaspheme. I cannot face
Without you her that nursed you at her breast.
Let us curse God together and going forth
Plunge headlong in the waves, and be at rest
In Hell for evermore. Some end to this!—
This awful gnawing pain in every part!
Or certainty that this will never end!
This, now, is Hell! . . . There was a paltry way
Of fooling God some casuists hit upon.
How went it? Yes, that God did fore-ordain
And so foreknew that those who should believe
Should enter glory of their own free-will.
Ah! pink of blasphemies that makes of God
An impotent spectator! Let us two
Believe in this, and that shall damn us best! . . .
I dare, but cannot; for the Lord of Hosts,
The God of my salvation, is my God:
He, ere the world began, predestined me
To life eternal: to the bitter end
Against my will I persevere, a saint;

And find my will at length the will of God.
 What is my son, and what the hopes and fears
 Of my dead wife and me before the flame
 Of God's pure purpose, His, from whose dread eyes
 The earth and heaven fled and found no place!
 Beside the crystal river I shall walk
 For ever with the Lord. The city of gold,
 The jasper walls thereof, the gates of pearl,
 The bright foundation-stones of emerald,
 Of sapphire, chrysoprase, of every gem,
 And the high triumph of unending day
 Shall be but wildfire on a summer eve
 Beside the exceeding glory of delight,
 That shall entrance me with the constant thought
 Of how in Hell through all eternity
 My son performs the perfect will of God.
 Amen. I come, Lord Jesus. If his sin
 Be not to death . . . Heaven opens!" . . .

Thus he died;
 For this was in the North where Time stands still,
 And Change holds holidays; where Old and New
 Welter upon the border of the world,
 And savage creeds can kill.

The trembling boy

Knelt down, but dared to think, "A dreadful death!
 To die believing in so dull a God,
 A useless Hell, a jewel-huckster's Heaven!"
 Forthwith it flashed like light across his mind,
 "If it be terrible into the hands
 Of the living God to fall, how much more dire
 To sicken face to face, like our sad age,
 Chained to an icy corpse of deity,
 Decked though it be and painted and embalmed!"

He took his father's hand and kissed his brow
And, weeping like a woman, watched him long;
Then softly rose and stepped into the night.
He stood beside the house a little space,
Hearing the wind speak low in whispers quaint,
An irresponsible and wandering voice.
But soon he hastened to the water's edge;
For from the shore there came sea-minstrelsy
Of waves that broke upon the hollow beach,
With liquid sound of pearling surges blent,
Cymbals, and muffled drums and dulcimers.

Sparse diamonds in the dead-black dome of night,
A few stars lit the moon-deserted air
And swarthy heaving of the firth obscure.
He, knowing every rock and sandy reach,
All night unfalteringly walked the shore,
While tempest after tempest rose and fell
Within his soul, that like an o'er-wrought sea
Laboured to burst its continent and hang
Some glittering trophy high among the stars.
At last the fugal music of the tide,
With cymbals, muffled drums, and dulcimers,
Into his blood a rhythmic measure beat,
And gave his passion scope and way in words.

"How unintelligent, how blind am I,
How vain!" he cried. "A God? a mole, a worm!
An engine frail, of brittle bones conjoined;
With tissue packed; with nerves, transmitting force;
And driven by water, thick and coloured red:
That may for some few pence a day be hired
In thousands to be shot at! Oh, a God,
That lies and steals and murders! Such a God
Passionate, dissolute, incontinent!

A God that starves in thousands, and ashamed,
Or shameless in the workhouse lurks; that sweats
In mines and foundries! An enchanted God,
Whose nostrils in a palace breathe perfume,
Whose cracking shoulders hold the palace up,
Whose shoeless feet are rotting in the mire!

A God who said a little while ago,
'I'll have no creed'; and of his Godhood straight
Patched up a creed unwittingly—with which
He went and killed his father. Subtle lie
That tempts our weakness always; magical,
And magically changed to suit the time!

'Lo, ye shall be as Gods!'—the serpent's cry—
Rose up again, 'Ye shall be sons of God';
And now the glozing word is in the air,
'Thou shalt be God by simply taking thought.'

And if one could, believing this, convert
A million to be upright, chaste and strong,
Gentle and tolerant, it were but to found
A new religion, bringing new offence,
Setting the child against the father still.

Some thought imprisons us; we set about
To bring the world within the woven spell:
Our ruthless creeds that bathe the earth in blood
Are moods by alchemy made dogmas of—
The petrification of a metaphor.

No creed for me! I am a man apart:
A mouthpiece for the creeds of all the world;
A soulless life that angels may possess
Or demons haunt, wherein the foulest things
May loll at ease beside the loveliest;

A martyr for all mundane moods to tear;
The slave of every passion; and the slave
Of heat and cold, of darkness and of light;
A trembling lyre for every wind to sound.

I am a man set by to overhear
The inner harmony, the very tune
Of Nature's heart; to be a thoroughfare
For all the pageantry of Time; to catch
The mutterings of the Spirit of the Hour
And make them known; and of the lowliest
To be the minister, and therefore reign
Prince of the powers of the air, lord of the world
And master of the sea. Within my heart
I'll gather all the universe, and sing
As sweetly as the spheres; and I shall be
The first of men to understand himself. . . .
And lo! to give me courage comes the dawn,
Crimsoning the smoky east; and still the sun
With fire-shod feet shall step from hill to hill
Downward before the night; winter shall ply
His ancient craft, soldering the years with ice;
And spring appear, caught in a leafless brake,
Breathless with wonder and the tears half-dried
Upon her rosy cheek; summer shall come
And waste his passion like a prodigal
Right royally; and autumn spend her gold
Free-handed as a harlot; men to know,
Women to love are waiting everywhere."

A BALLAD OF HEAVEN

HE wrought at one great work for years;
The world passed by with lofty look:
Sometimes his eyes were dashed with tears;
Sometimes his lips with laughter shook.

His wife and child went clothed in rags,
And in a windy garret starved:

He trod his measures on the flags,
And high on heaven his music carved.

Wistful he grew but never feared;
For always on the midnight skies
His rich orchestral score appeared
In stars and zones and galaxies.

He thought to copy down his score:
The moonlight was his lamp: he said,
"Listen, my love"; but on the floor
His wife and child were lying dead.

Her hollow eyes were open wide;
He deemed she heard with special zest:
Her death's-head infant coldly eyed
The desert of her shrunken breast.

"Listen, my love: my work is done;
I tremble as I touch the page
To sign the sentence of the sun
And crown the great eternal age.

"The slow adagio begins;
The winding-sheets are ravelled out
That swathe the minds of men, the sins
That wrap their rotting souls about.

"The dead are heralded along;
With silver trumps and golden drums,
And flutes and oboes, keen and strong,
My brave andante singing comes.

"Then like a python's sumptuous dress
The frame of things is cast away,

And out of Time's obscure distress,
The thundering scherzo crashes Day.

"For three great orchestras I hope
My mighty music shall be scored:
On three high hills they shall have scope
With heaven's vault for a sounding-board.

"Sleep well, love; let your eyelids fall;
Cover the child; goodnight, and if . . .
What? Speak . . . the traitorous end of all!
Both . . . cold and hungry . . . cold and stiff!

"But no, God means us well, I trust:
Dear ones, be happy, hope is nigh:
We are too young to fall to dust,
And too unsatisfied to die."

He lifted up against his breast
The woman's body stark and wan;
And to her withered bosom pressed
The little skin-clad skeleton.

"You see you are alive," he cried.
He rocked them gently to and fro.
"No, no, my love, you have not died;
Nor you, my little fellow; no."

Long in his arms he strained his dead
And crooned an antique lullaby;
Then laid them on the lowly bed,
And broke down with a doleful cry.

"The love, the hope, the blood, the brain,
Of her and me, the budding life,

And my great music—all in vain!
My unscored work, my child, my wife!

"We drop into oblivion,
And nourish some suburban sod:
My work, this woman, this my son,
Are now no more: there is no God.

"The world's a dustbin; we are due,
And death's cart waits: be life accurst!"
He stumbled down beside the two,
And clasping them, his great heart burst.

Straightway he stood at heaven's gate,
Abashed and trembling for his sin:
I trow he had not long to wait,
For God came out and led him in.

And then there ran a radiant pair,
Ruddy with haste and eager-eyed
To meet him first upon the stair—
His wife and child beatified.

They clad him in a robe of light,
And gave him heavenly food to eat;
Great seraphs praised him to the height,
Archangels sat about his feet.

God, smiling, took him by the hand,
And led him to the brink of heaven:
He saw where systems whirling stand,
Where galaxies like snow are driven.

Dead silence reigned; a shudder ran
Through space; Time furled his wearied wings;

A slow adagio then began
 Sweetly resolving troubled things.

The dead were heralded along:
 As if with drums and trumps of flame,
 And flutes and oboes keen and strong,
 A brave andante singing came.

Then like a python's sumptuous dress
 The frame of things was cast away,
 And out of Time's obscure distress
 The conquering scherzo thundered Day.

He doubted; but God said "Even so;
 Nothing is lost that's wrought with tears:
 The music that you made below
 Is now the music of the spheres."

A BALLAD OF A NUN

FROM Eastertide to Eastertide
 For ten long years her patient knees
 Engraved the stones—the fittest bride
 Of Christ in all the diocese.

She conquered every earthly lust;
 The abbess loved her more and more;
 And, as a mark of perfect trust,
 Made her the keeper of the door.

High on a hill the convent hung,
 Across a duchy looking down,
 Where everlasting mountains flung
 Their shadows over tower and town.

The jewels of their lofty snows
In constellations flashed at night;
Above their crests the moon arose;
The deep earth shuddered with delight.

Long ere she left her cloudy bed,
Still dreaming in the orient land,
On many a mountain's happy head
Dawn lightly laid her rosy hand.

The adventurous sun took Heaven by storm;
Clouds scattered largesses of rain;
The sounding cities, rich and warm,
Smouldered and glittered in the plain.

Sometimes it was a wandering wind,
Sometimes the fragrance of the pine,
Sometimes the thought how others sinned,
That turned her sweet blood into wine.

Sometimes she heard a serenade
Complaining sweetly far away:
She said, "A young man woos a maid";
And dreamt of love till break of day.

Then would she ply her knotted scourge
Until she swooned; but evermore
She had the same red sin to purge,
Poor, passionate keeper of the door!

For still night's starry scroll unfurled,
And still the day came like a flood:
It was the greatness of the world
That made her long to use her blood.

In winter-time when Lent drew nigh,
And hill and plain were wrapped in snow,
She watched beneath the frosty sky
The nearest city nightly glow.

Like peals of airy bells outworn
Faint laughter died above her head
In gusts of broken music borne:
“They keep the Carnival,” she said.

Her hungry heart devoured the town:
“Heaven save me by a miracle!
Unless God sends an angel down,
Thither I go though it were Hell.”

She dug her nails deep in her breast,
Sobbed, shrieked, and straight withdrew the bar;
A fledgling flying from the nest,
A pale moth rushing to a star.

Fillet and veil in strips she tore;
Her golden tresses floated wide;
The ring and bracelet that she wore
As Christ’s betrothed, she cast aside.

“Life’s dearest meaning I shall probe;
Lo! I shall taste of love at last!
Away!” She doffed her outer robe,
And sent it sailing down the blast.

Her body seemed to warm the wind;
With bleeding feet o’er ice she ran:
“I leave the righteous God behind;
I go to worship sinful man.”

She reached the sounding city's gate;
No question did the warder ask:
He passed her in: "Welcome, wild mate!"
He thought her some fantastic mask.

Half-naked through the town she went;
Each footstep left a bloody mark;
Crowds followed her with looks intent;
Her bright eyes made the torches dark.

Alone and watching in the street
There stood a grave youth nobly dressed;
To him she knelt and kissed his feet;
Her face her great desire confessed.

Straight to his house the nun he led:
"Strange lady, what would you with me?"
"Your love, your love, sweet lord," she said;
"I bring you my virginity."

He healed her bosom with a kiss;
She gave him all her passion's hoard;
And sobbed and murmured ever, "This
Is life's great meaning, dear, my lord.

"I care not for my broken vow;
Though God should come in thunder soon,
I am sister to the mountains now,
And sister to the sun and moon."

Through all the towns of Belmarie
She made a progress like a queen.
"She is," they said, "what'er she be,
The strangest woman ever seen.

"From fairyland she must have come,
Or else she is a mermaiden."

Some said she was a ghoul, and some
A heathen goddess born again.

But soon her fire to ashes burned;
Her beauty changed to haggardness;
Her golden hair to silver turned;
The hour came of her last caress.

At midnight from her lonely bed
She rose, and said, "I have had my will."
The old ragged robe she donned, and fled
Back to the convent on the hill.

Half-naked as she went before,
She hurried to the city wall,
Unnoticed in the rush and roar
And splendour of the carnival.

No question did the warder ask:
Her ragged robe, her shrunken limb,
Her dreadful eyes! "It is no mask;
It is a she-wolf, gaunt and grim!"

She ran across the icy plain;
Her worn blood curdled in the blast;
Each footstep left a crimson stain;
The white-faced moon looked on aghast.

She said between her chattering jaws,
"Deep peace is mine, I cease to strive;
Oh, comfortable convent laws,
That bury foolish nuns alive!"

"A trowel for my passing-bell,
 A little bed within the wall,
 A coverlet of stones; how well
 I there shall keep the Carnival!"

Like tired bells chiming in their sleep,
 The wind faint peals of laughter bore;
 She stopped her ears and climbed the steep,
 And thundered at the convent door.

It opened straight: she entered in,
 And at the wardress' feet fell prone:
 "I come to purge away my sin;
 Bury me, close me up in stone."

The wardress raised her tenderly;
 She touched her wet and fast-shut eyes:
 "Look, sister; sister, look at me;
 Look; can you see through my disguise?"

She looked and saw her own sad face,
 And trembled, wondering, "Who art thou?"
 "God sent me down to fill your place:
 I am the Virgin Mary now."

And with the word, God's mother shone:
 The wanderer whispered, "Mary, hail!"
 The vision helped her to put on
 Bracelet and fillet, ring and veil.

"You are sister to the mountains now,
 And sister to the day and night;
 Sister to God." And on the brow
 She kissed her thrice, and left her sight.

While dreaming in her cloudy bed,
Far in the crimson orient land,
On many a mountain's happy head
Dawn lightly laid her rosy hand.

SONG OF A TRAIN

A MONSTER taught
To come to hand
Amain,
As swift as thought
Across the land
The train.

The song it sings
Has an iron sound;
Its iron wings
Like wheels go round.

Crash under bridges,
Flash over ridges,
And vault the downs;
The road is straight—
Nor stile, nor gate;
For milestones—towns!

Voluminous, vanishing, white,
The steam plume trails;
Parallel streaks of light,
The polished rails.

Oh, who can follow?
The little swallow,
The trout of the sky:
But the sun
Is outrun,
And Time passed by.

O'er bosky dens,
By marsh and mead,
Forest and fens
Embodied speed
Is clanked and hurled;
O'er rivers and runnels;
And into the earth
And out again
In death and birth
That know no pain,
For the whole round world
Is a warren of railway tunnels.

Hark! hark! hark!
It screams and cleaves the dark;
And the subterranean night
Is gilt with smoky light.
Then out again apace
It runs its thundering race,
The monster taught
To come to hand
Amain,
That swift as thought
Speeds through the land
The train.

THIRTY BOB A WEEK

I COULDN'T touch a stop and turn a screw,
 And set the blooming world a-work for me,
 Like such as cut their teeth—I hope, like you—
 On the handle of a skeleton gold key;
 I cut mine on a leek, which I eat it every week:
 I'm a clerk at thirty bob as you can see.

But I don't allow it's luck and all a toss;
 There's no such thing as being starred and crossed;
 It's just the power of some to be a boss,
 And the bally power of others to be bossed:
 I face the music, sir; you bet I ain't a cur;
 Strike me lucky if I don't believe I'm lost!

For like a mole I journey in the dark,
 A-travelling along the underground
 From my Pillar'd Halls and broad Suburban Park,
 To come the daily dull official round;
 And home again at night with my pipe all alright,
 A-scheming how to count ten bob a pound.

And it's often very cold and very wet,
 And my missis stitches towels for a hunks;
 And the Pillar'd Halls is half of it to let—
 Three rooms about the size of travelling trunks.
 And we cough, my wife and I, to dislocate a sigh,
 When the noisy little kids are in their bunks.

But you never hear her do a growl or whine,
 For she's made of flint and roses, very odd;
 And I've got to cut my meaning rather fine,
 Or I'd blubber, for I'm made of greens and sod:

So p'r'aps we are in Hell for all that I can tell,
And lost and damn'd and served up hot to God.

I ain't blaspheming, Mr. Silver-tongue;
I'm saying things a bit beyond your art:
Of all the rummy starts you ever sprung,
Thirty bob a week's the rummiest start!
With your science and your books and your the'ries
about spooks,
Did you ever hear of looking in your heart?

I didn't mean your pocket, Mr., no:
I mean that having children and a wife,
With thirty bob on which to come and go,
Isn't dancing to the tabor and the fife:
When it doesn't make you drink, by Heaven! it makes
you think,
And notice curious items about life.

I step into my heart and there I meet
A god-almighty devil singing small,
Who would like to shout and whistle in the street,
And squelch the passers flat against the wall;
If the whole world was a cake he had the power to take,
He would take it, ask for more, and eat them all.

And I meet a sort of simpleton beside,
The kind that life is always giving beans;
With thirty bob a week to keep a bride
He fell in love and married in his teens:
At thirty bob he stuck; but he knows it isn't luck:
He knows the seas are deeper than tureens.

And the god-almighty devil and the fool
That meet me in the High Street on the strike,

When I walk about my heart a-gathering wool,
Are my good and evil angels if you like.
And both of them together in every kind of weather
Ride me like a double-seated bike.

That's rough a bit and needs its meaning curled.
But I have a high old hot un in my mind—
A most engrugious notion of the world,
That leaves your lightning 'rithmetic behind:
I give it at a glance when I say, "There ain't no chance,
Nor nothing of the lucky-lottery kind."

And it's this way that I make it out to be:
No fathers, mothers, countries, climates—none;
Not Adam was responsible for me,
Nor society, nor systems, nary one:
A little sleeping seed, I woke—I did, indeed—
A million years before the blooming sun.

I woke because I thought the time had come;
Beyond my will there was no other cause;
And everywhere I found myself at home,
Because I chose to be the thing I was;
And in whatever shape of mollusc or of ape
I always went according to the laws.

I was the love that chose my mother out;
I joined two lives and from the union burst;
My weakness and my strength without a doubt
Are mine alone for ever from the first:
It's just the very same with a difference in the name
As "Thy will be done." You say it if you durst!

They say it daily up and down the land
As easy as you take a drink, it's true;

But the difficultest go to understand,
And the difficultest job a man can do,
Is to come it brave and meek with thirty bob a week,
And feel that that's the proper thing for you.

It's a naked child against a hungry wolf;
It's playing bowls upon a splitting wreck;
It's walking on a string across a gulf
With millstones fore-and-aft about your neck;
But the thing is daily done by many and many a one;
And we fall, face forward, fighting, on the deck.

IN ROMNEY MARSH

As I went down to Dymchurch Wall,
I heard the South sing o'er the land;
I saw the yellow sunlight fall
On knolls where Norman churches stand.

And ringing shrilly, taut and lithe,
Within the wind a core of sound,
The wire from Romney town to Hythe
Alone its airy journey wound.

A veil of purple vapour flowed
And trailed its fringe along the Straits;
The upper air like sapphire glowed;
And roses filled Heaven's central gates.

Masts in the offing wagged their tops;
The swinging waves pealed on the shore;
The saffron beach, all diamond drops
And beads of surge, prolonged the roar.

As I came up from Dymchurch Wall,
I saw above the Downs' low crest
The crimson brands of sunset fall,
Flicker and fade from out the west.

Night sank: like flakes of silver fire
The stars in one great shower came down;
Shrill blew the wind; and shrill the wire
Rang out from Hythe to Romney town.

The darkly shining salt sea drops
Streamed as the waves clashed on the shore;
The beach, with all its organ stops
Pealing again, prolonged the roar.

A CINQUE PORT

BELOW the down the stranded town,
What may betide forlornly waits,
With memories of smoky skies,
When Gallic navies crossed the straits;
When waves with fire and blood grew bright,
And cannon thundered through the night.

With swinging stride the rhythmic tide
Bore to the harbour barque and sloop;
Across the bar the ship of war,
In castled stern and lantered poop,
Came up with conquests on her lee,
The stately mistress of the sea.

Where argosies have wooed the breeze,
The simple sheep are feeding now;

And near and far across the bar
 The ploughman whistles at the plough;
 Where once the long waves washed the shore,
 Larks from their lowly lodgings soar.

Below the down the stranded town
 Hears far away the rollers beat;
 About the wall the seabirds call;
 The salt wind murmurs through the street;
 Forlorn the sea's forsaken bride,
 Awaits the end that shall betide.

LONDON

ATHWART the sky a lowly sigh
 From west to east the sweet wind carried;
 The sun stood still on Primrose Hill;
 His light in all the city tarried:
 The clouds on viewless columns bloomed
 Like smouldering lilies unconsumed.

"Oh sweetheart, see! how shadowy,
 Of some occult magician's rearing,
 Or swung in space of heaven's grace
 Dissolving, dimly reappearing,
 Afloat upon ethereal tides
 St. Paul's above the city rides!"

A rumour broke through the thin smoke
 Enwreathing abbey, tower, and palace,
 The parks, the squares, the thoroughfares,
 The million-peopled lanes and alleys,
 An ever-muttering prisoned storm,
 The heart of London beating warm.

DECADENTS

(PROLOGUE TO "EARL LAVENDER")

THOUGH our eyes turn ever waveward,
 Where our sun is well-nigh set;
 Though our Century totters graveward,
 We may laugh a little yet.

Oh! our age-end style perplexes
 All our elders time has tamed;
 On our sleeves we wear our sexes,
 Our diseases unashamed.

Have we lost the mood romantic
 That was once our right by birth?
 Lo! the greenest girl is frantic,
 With the woe of all the earth!

But we know a British rumour,
 And we think it whispers well:
 "We would ventilate our humour
 In the very jaws of Hell."

Though our thoughts turn ever Doomwards,
 Though our sun is well-nigh set,
 Though our Century totters tombwards,
 We may laugh a little yet.

ST GEORGE'S DAY

BASIL MENZIES PERCY BRIAN HERBERT SANDY

Herbert: I hear the lark and linnet sing;
 I hear the whitethroat's alto ring.

Menzies: I hear the idle workman sigh;
I hear his hungry children cry.

Sandy: Still sad and brooding over ill:
Why listen to discordant tones?

Herbert: We dream, we sing, we drive the quill
To keep the flesh upon our bones.
Therefore what trade have we with wrongs,
With ways and woes that spoil our songs?

Menzies: None, none! Alas, there lies the sting!
We see, we feel, but cannot aid;
We hide our foolish heads and sing:
We live, we die; and all is said.

Herbert: To wonder-worlds of old romance
Our aching thoughts for solace run.

Brian: And some have stolen fire from France.

Sandy: And some adore the Midnight sun.

Menzies: I, too, for light the world explore.
And trembling, tread where angels trod;
Devout at every shrine adore,
And follow after each new god.
But by the altar everywhere
I find the money-changer's stall;
And littering every temple-stair
The sick and sore like maggots crawl.

Basil: Your talk is vain; your voice is hoarse.

Menzies: I would they were as hoarse and vain

As their wide-weltering spring and source
Of helpless woe, of wrath insane.

Herbert: Why will you hug the coast of Hell?

Brian: Why antedate the Judgment Day?

Menzies: Nay, flout me not; you know me well.

Basil: Right, comrade! Give your fancy way.

Menzies: I cannot see the stars and flowers,
Nor hear the lark's soprano ring,
Because a ruddy darkness lowers
For ever, and the tempests sing.
I see the strong coerce the weak,
And labour overwrought rebel;
I hear the useless treadmill creak,
The prisoner, cursing in his cell;
I see the loafer-burnished wall;
I hear the rotting match-girl whine;
I see the unslept switchman fall;
I hear the explosion in the mine;
I see along the heedless street
The sandwichmen trudge through the mire;
I hear the tired quick tripping feet
Of sad, gay girls who ply for hire.

Basil: To brood on feeble woe at length
Must drive the sanest thinker mad;
Consider rather weal and strength.

Menzies: On what foundations do they stand?
I mark the sable ironclad
In every sea; in every land.

An army, idling on the chain
Of rusty peace that chafes and frets
Its seven-leagued limbs, and bristled mane
Of glittering bayonets;
The glowing blast, the fire-shot smoke
Where guns are forged and armour-plate;
The mammoth hammer's pounding stroke;
The din of our dread iron date.
And always divers undertones
Within the roaring tempest throb—
The chink of gold, the labourer's groans,
The infant's wail, the woman's sob.
Hoarsely they beg of Fate to give
A little lightening of their woe,
A little time to love, to live,
A little time to think and know.
I see where from the slums may rise
Some unexpected dreadful dawn—
The gleam of steeled and scowling eyes,
A flash of women's faces wan!

Basil: This is St George's Day.

Menzies: St George? A wretched thief I vow.

Herbert: Nay, Menzies, you should rather say,
St George for Merry England, now!

Sandy: That surely is a phantom cry,
Hollow and vain for many years.

Menzies: I hear the idle workmen sigh;
I hear the drip of women's tears.

Herbert: I hear the lofty lark,
The lowly nightingale.

Basil: The present is a dungeon dark
Of social problems. Break the gaol!
Get out into the splendid Past
Or bid the splendid Future hail.

Menzies: Nor then, nor now, nor first, nor last,
I know. The slave of ruthless Law,
To me Time seems a dungeon vast
Where Life lies rotting in the straw.

Basil: I care not for your images
Of Life and Law. I want to sing
Of England and of Englishmen
Who made our country what it is.

Herbert: And I to praise the English Spring.

Percy: St George for Merry England, then!

Menzies: There is no England now, I fear.

Basil: No England, say you, and since when?

Menzies: Cockney and Celt and Scot are here,
And Democrats and "ans" and "ists"
In clubs and cliques and divers lists;
But now we have no Englishmen.

Basil: You utter what you never felt,
I know. By bog and mount and fen,
No Saxon, Norman, Scot, or Celt
I find, but only Englishmen.

Herbert: In all our hedges roses bud.

Basil: And thought and speech are more than blood.

Herbert: Away with spleen, and let us sing
The praises of the English Spring!

Basil: In weeds of gold and purple hues
Glad April bursts with piping news
Of swifts and swallows come again,
And of the tender pensive strain
The bulfinch sings from bush to bush.

Percy: And oh! the blackbird and the thrush
Interpret as no master may
The meaning of the night and day.

Sandy: They catch the whispers of the breeze
And weave them into melodies.

Brian: They utter for the hours that pass
The purpose of their moments bright.

Basil: They speak the passion of the grass,
That grows so stoutly day and night

Herbert: St George for merry England then!
For we are all good Englishmen!

Percy: We stand as our forefathers stood
For Liberty's and Conscience' sake.

Herbert: We are the sons of Robin Hood,
The sons of Hereward the Wake.

Percy: The sons of yeomen, English-fed,
Ready to feast, or drink or fight.

Herbert: The sons of kings—of Hal and Ned,
Who kept their island right and tight.

Percy: The sons of Cromwell's Ironsides,
Who knew no king but God above.

Basil: We are the sons of English brides,
Who married Englishmen for love.

Sandy: Oh, now I see Fate's means and ends!
The Bruce and Wallace wight I ken,
Who saved old Scotland from its friends,
Were mighty northern Englishmen.

Brian: And Parnell, who so greatly fought
Against a wanton useless yoke,
With Fate inevitably wrought
That Irish should be English folk.

Basil: By bogland, highland, down, and fen,
All Englishmen, all Englishmen!

Menzies: There is no England now, I say—

Brian: No England now! My grief, my grief!

Menzies: We lie widespread, the dragon-prey
Of any Cappadocian thief.
In Arctic and Pacific seas
We lounge and loaf: and either pole
We reach with sprawling colonies—
Unwieldy limbs that lack a soul.

Basil: St George for Greater England, then!
The Boreal and the Austral men!

They reverence the heroic roll
Of Englishmen who sang and fought:
They have a soul, a mighty soul,
The soul of English speech and thought.

Sandy: And when the soul of England slept—

Basil: St George for foolish England, then!—

Sandy: Lo! Washington and Lincoln kept
America for Englishmen!

Basil: Hurrah! The English people reigns
Across the wide Atlantic flood!
It could not bind itself in chains!
For Yankee blood is English blood.

Herbert: And here the spring is queen
In robes of white and green.

Percy: In chestnut sconces opening wide
Tapers shall burn some fresh May morn.

Brian: And the elder brightens the highway side,
And the briony binds the thorn.

Sandy: White is the snow of the leafless sloe
The saxifrage by the sedge,
And white the lady-smocks a-row
And sauce-alone in the hedge.

Basil: England is in her Spring;
She only begins to be.
Oh! for an organ voice to sing
The summer I can see!

But the Past is there; and a mole may know,
And a bat may understand,
That we are the people wherever we go—
Kings by sea and land!

Herbert: And the spring is crowned and stoled
In purple and in gold.

Percy: Wherever light, wherever shade is,
Gold and purple may be seen.

Brian: Gold and purple lords-and-ladies
Tread a measure on the green.

Herbert: In deserts where the wild wind blows
Blossoms the magic hæmony.

Percy: Deep in the Chiltern woodland glows
The purple pasque anemone.

Basil: And England still grows great
And never shall grow old;
Within our hands we hold
The world's fate.

Menzies: We hold the world's fate?
The cry seems out of date.

Basil: Not while a single Englishman
Can work with English brains and bones!
Awaiting us since time began,
The swamps of ice, the wastes of flame!
In Boreal and Austral zones
Took life and meaning when we came.
The Sphinx that watches by the Nile

Has seen great empires pass away:
The mightiest lasted but a while;
Yet ours shall not decay.
Because, although red blood may flow,
And ocean shake with shot,
Not England's sword but England's Word
Undoes the Gordian Knot.
Bold tongue, stout heart, strong hand, brave brow
The world's four quarters win;
And patiently with axe and plough
We bring the deserts in.

Menzies: Whence comes this patriotic craze?
Spare us at least the hackneyed brag
About the famous English flag.

Basil: I'll spare no flourish of its praise.
Where'er our flag floats in the wind
Order and justice dawn and shine.
The dusky myriads of Ind,
The swarthy tribes far south the line,
And all who fight with lawless law,
And all with lawless men who cope
Look hitherward across the brine,
For we are the world's forlorn hope.

Menzies: That makes my heart leap up! Hurrah!
We are the world's forlorn hope!

Herbert: And with the merry birds we sing
The praises of the English Spring.

Percy: Iris and orchis now unfold.

Brian: The drooping-leaved laburnums ope
In thunder-showers of greenish gold.

Menzies: And we are the world's forlorn hope!

Sandy: The lilacs shake their dancing plumes
Of lavender, mauve, and heliotrope.

Herbert: The speedwell on the highway blooms.

Menzies: And we are the world's forlorn hope!

Sandy: Skeletons lurk in every street.

Herbert: We push and strike for air and scope.

Brian: The pulses of rebellion beat
Where want and hunger skulk and mope.

Menzies: But though we wander far astray
And oft in gloomy darkness grope,
Fearless we face the blackest day,
For we are the world's forlorn hope.

Sandy: St George for Merry England then!
For we are all good Englishmen!

Basil: St George for Greater England then!
The Boreal and the Austral men!

All: By bogland, highland, down, and fen,
All Englishmen, all Englishmen!
Who with their latest breath shall sing
Of England and the English Spring!

MIDSUMMER DAY

BASIL

SANDY

HERBERT

Sandy: I cannot write, I cannot think;
 'Tis half delight and half distress:
 My memory stumbles on the brink
 Of some unfathomed happiness—

Of some old happiness divine.

What haunting scent, what haunting note,
 What word, or what melodious line,
 Sends my heart throbbing to my throat?

Basil: What? thrilled with happiness to-day,
 The longest day in all the year,
 Which we must spend in making hay
 By threshing straw in Fleet Street here!

What scent? what sound? The odour stale
 Of watered streets; the rumour loud
 Of hoof and wheel on road and rail,
 The rush and trample of the crowd!

Herbert: Humming the song of many a lark,
 Out of the sea, across the shires,
 The west wind blows about the park,
 And faintly stirs the Fleet Street wires.

Perhaps it sows the happy seed
 That blossoms in your memory;

Certain of many a western mead,
And hill and stream it speaks to me.

Basil: Go on: of rustic visions tell
Till I forget the wilderness
Of sooty brick, the dusty smell,
The jangle of the printing-press.

Herbert: I hear the woodman's measured stroke;
I see the amber streamlet glide—
Above, the green gold of the oak
Fledges the gorge on either side.

A thatched roof shines athwart the gloom
Of the high moorland's darksome ground;
Far off the surging rollers boom,
And fill the shadowy wood with sound.

Basil: You have pronounced the magic sign!
The city with its thousand years,
Like some embodied mood of mine
Uncouth, prodigious, disappears.

I stand upon a lowly bridge,
Moss-grown beside the old Essex home;
Over the distant purple ridge
The clouds arise in sultry foam;

In many a cluster, wreath and chain
A silvery vapour hangs on high,
And snowy scarfs of silken grain
Bedeck the blue slopes of the sky;

The wandering water sighs and calls,
And breaks into a chant that rings
Beneath the vaulted bridge, then falls
And under heaven softly sings;

A light wind lingers here and there,
And whispers in an unknown tongue
The passionate secrets of the air,
That never may by man be sung:

Low, low, it whispers; stays, and goes;
It comes again; again takes flight;
And like a subtle presence grows
And almost gathers into sight.

Sandy: The wind that stirs the Fleet Street wires,
And roams and quests about the Park,
That wanders all across the shires,
Humming the song of many a lark—

The wind—it is the wind, whose breath,
Perfumed with roses, wakes in me
From shrouded slumbers deep as death
A yet unfaded memory.

Basil: About Midsummer, every hour
Ten thousand rosebuds opening blush,
The land is all one rosy bower,
And rosy odours haunt and flush

The winds of heaven up and down:
On the top-gallant of the air

The lark, the pressman in the town
Breathe only rosy incense rare.

Sandy: And I, enchanted by the rose,
Remember when I first began
To know what in its bosom glows
Exhaling scent ambrosian.

A child, at home in streets and quays,
The city tumult in my brain,
I only knew of tarnished trees,
And skies corroding vapours stain.

One summer—Time upon my head
Had showered the curls of years eleven—
Me, for a month, good fortune led
Where trees are green and hills kiss heaven.

By glen and mountain, moor and lawn,
Burn-side and sheep-path, day and night,
I wandered, a belated faun,
All sense, all wonder, all delight.

And once at eve I climbed a hill,
Burning to see the sun appear,
And watched the jewelled darkness fill
With lamps and clustered tapers clear.

At last the strongest stars were spent;
A glimmering shadow overcame
The swarthy-purple firmament,
And throbbed and kindled into flame;

The pallid day, the trembling day
 Put on her saffron wedding-dress,
 And watched her bridegroom far away
 Soar through the starry wilderness.

I clasped my hands and closed my eyes,
 And tears relieved my ecstasy:
 I dared not watch the sun arise;
 Nor knew what magic daunted me:

And yet the roses seemed to tell
 More than the morn, had I but known
 The meaning of the fragrant smell
 That bound me with a subtle zone.

But in the gloaming when we played
 At hide-and-seek, and I with her
 Behind a rose-bush hid, afraid
 To meet her gaze, to breathe, or stir.

The dungeon of my sense was riven,
 The beauty of the world laid bare,
 A great wind caught me up to heaven
 Upon a cloud of golden hair;

And mouth touched mouth; and love was born;
 And when our wondering vision blent,
 We found the meaning of the morn,
 The meaning of the rose's scent.

Ah me! ah me! since then! since then!

Herbert: Nay, nay; let self-reproaches be!
 Now that this thought is throned again,
 Be zealous for its sovereignty.

Basil: And brave, great Nature must be thanked
And we must worship on our knees,
And hold for ever sacro-sanct
Such dewy memories as these.

A NEW BALLAD OF TANNHÄUSER

“WHAT hardy, tattered wretch is that
Who on our Synod dares intrude?”
Pope Urban with his council sat,
And near the door Tannhäuser stood.

His eye with light unearthly gleamed;
His yellow hair hung round his head
In elf locks lusterless: he seemed
Like one new-risen from the dead.

“Hear me, most Holy Father, tell
The tale that burns my soul within.
I stagger on the brink of hell;
No voice but yours can shrive my sin.”

“Speak, sinner.” “From my father’s house
Lightly I stepped in haste for fame;
And hoped by deeds adventurous
High on the world to carve my name.

“At early dawn I took my way;
My heart with peals of gladness rang;
Nor could I leave the woods all day,
Because the birds so sweetly sang.

“But when the happy birds had gone
To rest, and night with panic fears

And blushes deep came stealing on,
Another music thrilled my ears.

"I heard the evening wind serene,
And all the wandering waters sing
The deep delight the day had been,
The deep delight the night would bring.

"I heard the wayward earth express
In one long-drawn melodious sigh
The rapture of the sun's caress,
The passion of the brooding sky.

"The air, a harp of myriad chords,
Intently murmured overhead;
My heart grew great with unsung words:
I followed where the music led.

"It led me to a mountain-chain,
Wherein athwart the deepening gloom,
High-hung above the wooded plain,
Appeared a summit like a tomb.

"Aloft a giddy pathway wound
That brought me to a darksome cave:
I heard, undaunted, underground
Wild winds and wilder voices rave,

"And plunged into that stormy world.
Cold hands assailed me impotent
In the gross darkness; serpents curled
About my limbs; but on I went.

"The wild winds buffeted my face;
The wilder voices shrieked despair;

A stealthy step with mine kept pace,
And subtle terror steeped the air.

"But the sweet sound that throbbed on high
Had left the upper world; and still
A cry rang in my heart—a cry!
For lo, far in the hollow hill,

"The dulcet melody withdrawn
Kept welling through the fierce uproar.
As I have seen the molten dawn
Across a swarthy tempest pour;

"So suddenly the magic note,
Transformed to light, a glittering brand,
Out of the storm and darkness smote
A peaceful sky, a dewy land.

"I scarce could breathe, I might not stir,
The while there came across the lea,
With singing maidens after her,
A woman wonderful to see.

"Her face—her face was strong and sweet;
Her looks were loving prophecies;
She kissed my brow: I kissed her feet—
A woman wonderful to kiss.

"She took me to a place apart
Where eglantine and roses wove
A bower, and gave me all her heart—
A woman wonderful to love.

"As I lay worshipping my bride,
While rose-leaves in her bosom fell,

And dreams came sailing on a tide
Of sleep, I heard a matin bell.

"It beat my soul as with a rod
Tingling with horror of my sin;
I thought of Christ, I thought of God,
And of the fame I meant to win.

"I rose; I ran; nor looked behind;
The doleful voices shrieked despair
In tones that pierced the crashing wind;
And subtle terror warped the air.

"About my limbs the serpents curled;
The stealthy step with mine kept pace;
But soon I reached the upper world:
I sought a priest; I prayed for grace.

"He said, 'Sad sinner, do you know
What fiend this is, the baleful cause
Of your dismay?' I loved her so
I never asked her what she was.

"He said, 'Perhaps not God above
Can pardon such unheard-of ill:
It was the pagan Queen of Love
Who lured you to her haunted hill!

'Each hour you spent with her was more
Than a full year! Only the Pope
Can tell what heaven may have in store
For one who seems past help and hope.'

"Forthwith I took the way to Rome:
I scarcely slept; I scarcely ate:

And hither quaking am I come,
But resolute to know my fate.

“Most Holy Father, save my soul! . . .
Ah God! again I hear the chime,
Sweeter than liquid bells that toll
Across a lake at vesper time . . .

“Her eyelids droop . . . I hear her sigh . . .
The rose-leaves fall. . . . She falls asleep .
The cry rings in my blood—the cry
That surges from the deepest deep.

“No man was ever tempted so!—
I say not this in my defence. . . .
Help, Father, help! or I must go!
The dulcet music draws me hence!”

He knelt—he fell upon his face.
Pope Urban said, “The eternal cost
Of guilt like yours eternal grace
Dare not remit: your soul is lost.

“When this dead staff I carry grows
Again and blossoms, heavenly light
May shine on you.” Tannhäuser rose;
And all at once his face grew bright.

He saw the emerald leaves unfold,
The emerald blossoms break and glance;
They watched him, wondering to behold
The rapture of his countenance.

The undivined, eternal God
Looked on him from the highest heaven,

And showed him by the budding rod
There was no need to be forgiven.

He heard melodious voices call
Across the world, an elfin shout;
And when he left the council-hall,
It seemed a great light had gone out.

With anxious heart, with troubled brow,
The Synod turned upon the Pope.
They saw; they cried, "A living bough,
.A miracle, a pledge of hope!"

And Urban trembling saw: "God's way
Is not as man's," he said. "Alack!
Forgive me, gracious heaven, this day
My sin of pride. Go, bring him back."

But swift as thought Tannhäuser fled,
And was not found. He scarcely slept;
He scarcely ate; for overhead
The ceaseless, dulcet music kept

Wafting him on. And evermore
The foliate staff he saw at Rome
Pointed the way; and the winds bore
Sweet voices whispering him to come.

The air, a world-enfolding flood
Of liquid music poured along;
And the wild cry within his blood
Became at last a golden song.

"All day," he sang—"I feel all day
The earth dilate beneath my feet;

I hear in fancy far away
The tidal heart of ocean beat.

"My heart amasses as I run
The depth of heaven's sapphire flower;
The resolute, enduring sun
Fulfils my soul with splendid power.

"I quiver with divine desire;
I clasp the stars; my thoughts immerse
Themselves in space; like fire in fire
I melt into the universe.

"For I am running to my love:
The eager roses burn below;
Orion wheels his sword above,
To guard the way God bids me go."

At dusk he reached the mountain chain,
Wherein athwart the deepening gloom,
High hung above the wooded plain
The Hörselberg rose like a tomb.

He plunged into the under-world;
Cold hands assailed him impotent
In the gross darkness; serpents curled
About his limbs; but on he went.

The wild winds buffeted his face;
The wilder voices shrieked despair;
A stealthy step with his kept pace;
And subtle terror steeped the air.

But once again the magic note,
Transformed to light, a glittering brand,

Out of the storm and darkness smote
A peaceful sky, a dewy land.

And once again he might not stir,
The while there came across the lea
With singing maidens after her
The Queen of Love so fair to see.

Her happy face was strong and sweet;
Her looks were loving prophecies;
She kissed his brow; he kissed her feet—
He kissed the ground her feet did kiss.

She took him to a place apart
Where eglantine and roses wove
A bower, and gave him all her heart—
The Queen of Love, the Queen of Love.

As he lay worshipping his bride
While rose-leaves in her bosom fell,
And dreams came sailing on a tide
Of sleep, he heard a matin-bell.

"Hark! Let us leave the magic hill,"
He said, "And live on earth with men."
"No; here," she said, "we stay, until
The Golden Age shall come again."

And so they wait, while empires sprung
Of hatred thunder past above,
Deep in the earth for ever young
Tannhäuser and the Queen of Love.

SERENADE

(1250 A. D.)

WITH stars, with trailing galaxies,
Like a white-rose bower in bloom,
Darkness garlands the vaulted skies,
Day's ethereal tomb;
A whisper without from the briny west
Thrills and sweetens the gloom;
Within, Miranda seeks her rest
High in her turret-room.

Armies upon her walls encamp
In silk and silver thread;
Chased and fretted, her silver lamp
Dimly lights her bed;
And now the silken screen is drawn,
The velvet coverlet spread;
And the pillow of down and snowy lawn
Mantles about her head.

With violet-scented rain
Sprinkle the rushy floor;
Let the tapestry hide the tinted pane,
And cover the chamber door;
But leave a glimmering beam,
Miranda belamour,
To touch and gild my waking dream,
For I am your troubadour.

I sound my throbbing lyre,
And sing to myself below;
Her damsel sits beside the fire
Crooning a song I know;

The tapestry shakes on the wall,
The shadows hurry and go,
The silent flames leap up and fall,
And the muttering birch-logs glow.

Deep and sweet she sleeps,
Because of her love for me;
And deep and sweet the peace that keeps
My happy heart in fee!
Peace on the heights, in the deeps,
Peace over hill and lea,
Peace through the star-lit steeps,
Peace on the starlit sea,
Because a simple maiden sleeps
Dreaming a dream of me!

PIPER, PLAY!

Now the furnaces are out,
And the aching anvils sleep;
Down the road the grimy rout
Tramples homeward twenty deep.
Piper, play! Piper, play!
Though we be o'erlaboured men,
Ripe for rest, pipe your best!
Let us foot it once again!

Bridled looms delay their din;
All the humming wheels are spent;
Busy spindles cease to spin;
Warp and woof must rest content.
Piper, play! Piper, play!
For a little we are free!
Foot it girls and shake your curls,
Haggard creatures though we be!

Racked and soiled the faded air
 Freshens in our holiday;
Clouds and tides our respite share;
 Breezes linger by the way.
Piper, rest! Piper, rest!
 Now, a carol of the moon!
Piper, piper, play your best!
 Melt the sun into your tune!

We are of the humblest grade;
 Yet we dare to dance our fill:
Male and female were we made—
 Fathers, mothers, lovers still!
Piper—softly; soft and low;
 Pipe of love in mellow notes,
Till the tears begin to flow,
 And our hearts are in our throats!

Nameless as the stars of night
 Far in galaxies unfurled,
Yet we wield unrivalled might,
 Joints and hinges of the world!
Night and day! night and day!
 Sound the song the hours rehearse!
Work and play! work and play!
 The order of the universe!

Now the furnaces are out,
 And the aching anvils sleep;
Down the road a merry rout
 Dances homeward, twenty deep.
Piper, play! Piper, play!
 Wearied people though we be,
Ripe for rest, pipe your best!
 For a little we are free!

HOLIDAY AT HAMPTON COURT

SCALES of pearly cloud inlay
North and south the turquoise sky,
While the diamond lamp of day
Quenchless burns, and time on high
A moment halts upon his way
Bidding noon again good-bye.

Gaffers, gammers, huzzies, louts,
Couples, gangs, and families
Sprawling, shake, with Babel-shouts
Bluff King Hal's funereal trees;
And eddying groups of stare-abouts
Quiz the sandstone Hercules.

When their tongues and tempers tire,
Harry and his little lot
Condescendingly admire
Lozenge-bed and crescent-plot,
Aglow with links of azure fire,
Pansy and forget-me-not.

Where the emerald shadows rest
In the lofty woodland aisle,
Chaffing lovers quaintly dressed
Chase and double many a mile,
Indifferent exiles in the west
Making love in cockney style.

Now the echoing palace fills;
Men and women, girls and boys
Trample past the swords and frills,
Kings and Queens and trulls and toys;

Or listening loll on window-sills,
Happy amateurs of noise!

That for pictured rooms of state!
Out they hurry, wench and knave,
Where beyond the palace-gate
Dusty legions swarm and rave,
With laughter, shriek, inane debate,
Kentish fire and comic stave.

Voices from the river call;
Organs hammer tune on tune;
Larks triumphant over all
Herald twilight coming soon,
For as the sun begins to fall
Near the zenith gleams the moon.

EPILOGUE TO FLEET STREET ECLOGUES

ARTIST

VOTARY

Votary: What gloomy outland region have I won?

Artist: This is the Vale of Hinnom. What are you?

Votary: A Votary of Life. I thought this tract,
With rubbish choked, had been a thoroughfare
For many a decade now.

Artist: No highway here!
And those who enter never can return.

Votary: But since my coming is an accident—

Artist: All who inhabit Hinnom enter there
By accident, carelessly cast aside,
Or self-induced in an evil hour.

Votary: But I shall walk about it and go forth.

Artist: I said so when I came; but I am here.

Votary: What brought you hither?

Artist: Chance, no other power:
My tragedy is common to my kind.—
Once from a mountain-top at dawn I saw
My life pass by, a pageant of the age,
Enchanting many minds with sound and light,
Array and colour, deed, device and spell.
And to myself I said aloud, “When thought
And passion shall be rooted deep, and fleshed
In all experience man may dare, yet front
His own interrogation unabashed:
Winged also, and inspired to cleave with might
Abysses and the loftiest firmament:
When my capacity and art are ranked
Among the powers of nature, and the world
Awaits my message, I will paint a scene
Of life and death, so tender, so humane,
That lust and avarice lulled awhile, shall gaze
With open countenances; broken hearts,
The haunt, the shrine, and wailing-place of woe,
Be comforted with respite unforeseen,
And immortality reprieve despair.”
The vision beckoned me; the prophecy,
That smokes and thunders in the blood of youth,

Compelled unending effort, treacherous
Decoys of doom although these tokens were.
Across the wisdom and the wasted love
Of some who barred the way my pageant stepped:
"Thus are all triumphs paved," I said; but soon,
Entangled in the tumult of the times,
Sundered and wrecked, it ceased to pace my thought,
Wherein alone its airy nature strode;
While the smooth world, whose lord I deemed myself,
Unsheathed its claws and blindly struck me down,
Mangled my soul for sport, and cast me out
Alive in Hinnom where human offal rots,
And fires are heaped against the tainted air.

Votary: Escape!

Artist: I tried, as you will try; and then,
Dauntless, I cried, "At midnight, darkly lit
By drifts of flame whose ruddy varnish dyes
The skulls and rounded knuckles light selects
Flickering upon the refuse of despair,
Here, as it should the costly pageant ends;
And here with my last strength, since I am I,
Here will I paint my scene of life and death:
Not that I dreamt of when the eager dawn,
And inexperience, stubborn parasite
Of youth and manhood, flattered in myself
And in a well-pleased following, vanities
Of hope, belief, good-will, the embroidered stuff
That masks the cruel eyes of destiny;
But a new scene profound and terrible
As Truth, the implacable antagonist.
And yet most tender, burning, bitter-sweet
As are the briny tears and crimson drops
Of human anguish, inconsolable

Throughout all time, and wept in every age
 By open wounds and cureless, such as I,
 Whence issues nakedly the heart of life."

Votary: What canvas and what colour could you find
 To paint in Hinnom so intense a scene?

Artist: I found and laid no colour. Look about!
 On the flame-roughened darkness whet your eyes.
 This needs no deeper hue; this is the thing:
 Millions of people huddled out of sight,
 The offal of the world.

Votary: I see them now,
 In groups, in multitudes, in hordes, and some
 Companionless, ill-lit by tarnished fire
 Under the towering darkness ceiled with smoke;
 Erect, supine, kneeling or prone, but all
 Sick-hearted and aghast among the bones.

Artist: Here pine the subtle souls that had no root.
 No home below, until disease or shame
 Undid the once-so-certain destiny
 Imagined for the Brocken-sprite of self,
 While earth, which seemed a pleasant inn of dreams,
 Unveiled a tedious death-bed and a grave.

Votary: I see! The disillusioned geniuses
 Who fain would make the world sit up, by Heaven!
 And dig God in the ribs, and who refuse
 Their own experience: would-bes, theorists,
 Artistic natures, failed reformers, knaves
 And fools incompetent or overbold,
 Broken evangelists and debauchees,
 Inebriates, criminals, cowards, virtual slaves.

Artist: The world is old; and countless strains of blood
Are now effete: these loathsome ruined lives
Are innocent—if life itself be good.
Inebriate, coward, artist, criminal—
The nicknames unintelligence expels
Remorse with when the conscience hints that all
Are guilty of the misery of one.
Look at these women: broken chalices,
Whose true aroma of the spring is spilt
In thankless streets and with the sewage blent.

Votary: Harlots, you mean; the scavengers of love,
Who sweep lust from our thresholds—needful brooms
In every age; the very bolts indeed
That clench and rivet solidarity.
All this is as it has been and shall be:
I see it, note it, and go hence. Farewell.

Artist: Here I await you.

* * * *

Votary: There is no way out.

Artist: But we are many. What? So pinched and pale
At once! Weep, and take courage. This is best,
Because the alternative is not to be.

Votary: But I am nothing yet, have made no mark
Upon my time; and, worse than nothing now,
Must wither in a nauseous heap of tares.
Why am I outcast who so loved the world?
How did I reach this place? Hush! Let me think.
I said—what did I say and do? Nothing to mourn.
I trusted life, and life has led me here.

Artist: Where dull endurance only can avail.
Scarcely a tithe of men escape this fate;
And not a tithe of those who suffer know
Their utter misery.

Votary: And must this be
Now and for ever, and has it always been?

Artist: Worse now than ever and ever growing worse.
Men as they multiply use up mankind
In greater masses and in subtler ways:
Ever more opportunity, more power
For intellect, the proper minister
Of life, that will usurp authority,
With lightning at its beck and prisoned clouds.
I mean that electricity and steam
Have set a barbarous fence about the earth,
And made the oceans and the continents
Preserved estates of crafty gather-alls;
Have loaded labour with a shotted chain,
And raised the primal curse a thousand powers.

Votary: What! Are there honest labourers outcast here?
Dreamers, pococurantes, wanton bloods
In plenty and to spare; but surely work
Attains another goal than Hinnom!

Artist: Look!
Seared by the sun and carved by cold or blanched
In darkness; gnarled and twisted all awry
By rotting fogs; lamed, limb-opped, cankered, burst,
The outworn workers!

Votary: I take courage then!
Since workers here abound it must be right
That men should end in Hinnom.

Artist: Right! How right?

The fable of the world till now records
Only the waste of life: the conquerors,
Tyrants and oligarchs, and men of ease,
Among the myriad nations, peoples, tribes,
Need not be thought of: earth's inhabitants,
Man, ape, dinornis for a moment breathe,
In misery die, and to oblivion
Are dedicated all. Consider still
The circumstance that most appeals to men:
Eternal siege and ravage of the source
Of being, of beauty, and of all delight,
The hell of whoredom. God! The hourly waste
Of women in the world since time began!

Votary: I think of it.

Artist: And of the waste of men
In war—pitiful soldiers, battle-harlots.

Votary: That also I consider.

Artist: Weaklings, fools
In millions who must end disastrously;
The willing hands and hearts, in millions too,
Paid with perdition for a life of toil;
The blood of women, a constant sacrifice,
Staining the streets and every altar-step;
The blood of men poured out in endless wars;
No hope, no help; the task, the stripes, the woe
Augmenting with the ages. Right, you say!

Votary: Do you remember how the moon appears
Illumining the night?

Artist: What has the moon
To do with Hinnom?

Votary: Call the moon to mind.
Can you? Or have you quite forgotten all
The magic of her beams?

Artist: Oh no! The moon
Is the last memory of ample thought,
Of joy and loveliness that one forgets
In this abode. Since first the tide of life
Began to ebb and flow in human veins,
The targe of lovers' looks, their brimming fount
Of dreams and chalice of their sighs; with peace
And deathless legend clad and crowned, the moon!

Votary: But I adore it with a newer love,
Because it is the offal of the globe.
When from the central nebula our orb,
Outflung, set forth upon its way through space,
Still towards its origin compelled to lean
And grope in molten tides, a belt of fire,
Home-sick, burst off at last, and towards the sun
Whirling, far short of its ambition fell,
Insphered a little distance from the earth
There to bethink itself and wax and wane,
The moon!

Artist: I see! I know! You mean that you
And I, and foiled ambitions every one
In every age; the outworn labourers,
Pearls of the sewer, idlers, armies, scroyles,
The offal of the world, will somehow be—
Are now a lamp by night, although we deem
Ourselves disgraced, forlorn; even as the moon,

The scum and slag of earth, that, if it feels,
 Feels only sterile pain, gladdens the mountains
 And the spacious sea.

Votary: I mean it. And I mean
 That the deep thoughts of immortality
 And of our alienage, inventing gods
 And paradise and wonders manifold,
 Are rooted in the centre. We are fire,
 Cut off and cooled a while: and shall return,
 The earth and all thereon that live and die,
 To be again candescent in the sun,
 Or in the sun's intenser, purer source.
 What matters Hinnom for an hour or two?
 Arise and let us sing; and, singing, build
 A tabernacle even with these ghastly bones.

THE OUTCAST

SOUL, be your own
 Pleasance and mart,
 A land unknown,
 A state apart.

Scowl, and be rude
 Should love entice;
 Call gratitude
 The costliest vice.

Deride the ill
 By fortune sent;
 Be scornful still
 If foes repent.

When curse and stone
Are hissed and hurled,
Aloof, alone
Disdain the world.

Soul, disregard
The bad, the good;
Be haughty, hard,
Misunderstood.

Be neutral; spare
No humblest lie,
And overbear
Authority.

Laugh wisdom down;
Abandon fate;
Shame the renown
Of all the great.

Dethrone the past;
Deed, vision—naught
Avails at last
Save your own thought.

Though on all hands
The powers unsheathe
Their lightning-brands
And from beneath,

And from above
One curse be hurled
With scorn, with love
Affront the world.

LATER POEMS

A RUNNABLE STAG

WHEN the pods went pop on the broom, green broom,
And apples began to be golden-skinned,
We harboured a stag in the Priory coomb,
And we feathered his trail up-wind, up-wind,
We feathered his trail up-wind—
A stag of warrant, a stag, a stag,
A runnable stag, a kingly crop,
Brow, bay and tray and three on top,
A stag, a runnable stag.

Then the huntsman's horn rang yap, yap, yap,
And "Forwards" we heard the harbourer shout;
But 'twas only a brocket that broke a gap
In the beechen underwood, driven out,
From the underwood antlered out
By warrant and might of the stag, the stag,
The runnable stag, whose lordly mind
Was bent on sleep, though beamed and tined
He stood, a runnable stag.

So we tufted the cover till afternoon
With Tinkerman's Pup and Bell-of-the-North;
And hunters were sulky and hounds out of tune
Before we tufted the right stag forth,
Before we tufted him forth,
The stag of warrant, the wily stag,
The runnable stag with his kingly crop,
Brow, bay and tray and three on the top,
The royal and runnable stag.

It was Bell-of-the-North and Tinkerman's Pup
 That stuck to the scent till the copse was drawn
 "Tally ho! tally ho!" and the hunt was up,
 The tufters whipped and the pack laid on,
 The resolute pack laid on,
 And the stag of warrant away at last,
 The runnable stag, the same, the same,
 His hoofs on fire, his horns like flame,
 A stag, a runnable stag.

"Let your gelding be: if you check or chide
 He stumbles at once and you're out of the hunt;
 For three hundred gentlemen, able to ride
 On hunters accustomed to bear the brunt,
 Accustomed to bear the brunt,
 Are after the runnable stag, the stag,
 The runnable stag with his kingly crop,
 Brow, bay and tray and three on top,
 The right, the runnable stag."

By perilous paths in coomb and dell,
 The heather, the rocks, and the river-bed,
 The pace grew hot, for the scent lay well,
 And a runnable stag goes right ahead,
 The quarry went right ahead—
 Ahead, ahead, and fast and far;
 His antlered crest, his cloven hoof,
 Brow, bay and tray and three aloof,
 The stag, the runnable stag.

For a matter of twenty miles and more,
 By the densest hedge and the highest wall,
 Through herds of bullocks he baffled the lore
 Of harbourer, huntsman, hounds and all,
 Of harbourer, hounds and all—

The stag of warrant, the wily stag,
For twenty miles, and five and five,
He ran, and he never was caught alive,
This stag, this runnable stag.

When he turned at bay in the leafy gloom,
In the emerald gloom where the brook ran deep,
He heard in the distance the rollers boom,
And he saw in a vision of peaceful sleep,
In a wonderful vision of sleep,
A stag of warrant, a stag, a stag,
A runnable stag in a jewelled bed,
Under the sheltering ocean dead,
A stag, a runnable stag.

So a fateful hope lit up his eye,
And he opened his nostrils wide again,
And he tossed his branching antlers high
As he headed the hunt down the Charlock glen,
As he raced down the echoing glen
For five miles more, the stag, the stag,
For twenty miles, and five and five,
Not to be caught now, dead or alive,
The stag, the runnable stag.

Three hundred gentlemen, able to ride,
Three hundred horses as gallant and free,
Beheld him escape on the evening tide,
Far out till he sank in the Severn Sea,
Till he sank in the depths of the sea—
The stag, the buoyant stag, the stag
That slept at last in a jewelled bed
Under the sheltering ocean spread,
The stag, the runnable stag.

THE LAST SONG

“Songster”—say you?—“sing!”
Not a note have I!
Effort cannot bring
Fancy from the sky:
Hark!—the rusty string!
Leave me here to die.
“Songster, songster, sing!
Tune your harp and try.
Sing! we bid you sing
Once before you die!”

Withered, angry, mad,
Who would list to me,
Since my singing sad
Troubled earth and sea
When my heart was glad
And my fancy free?
“Sad or joyful, sing!
Look about, above!
Trust the world and sing
Once again of love!”

Love? I know the word:
Love is of the rose.
Have you seen or heard
Love among the snows?
Yet my heart is stirred!
Nay, my fancy glows!
“Summon all your powers;
Sing of joy or woe—
Love among the flowers,
Love amidst the snow.”

Death is but a trance:
Life, but now begun!
Welcome change and chance:
Though my days are done,
Let the planets dance
Lightly round the sun!
Morn and evening clasp
Earth with loving hands—
In a ruddy grasp
All the pleasant lands!

Now I hear the deep
Bourdon of the bee,
Like a sound asleep
Wandering o'er the lea;
While the song-birds keep
Urging nature's plea.
Hark! the violets pray
Swooning in the sun!
Hush! the roses say
Love and death are one!

Loud my dying rhyme
Like a trumpet rings:
Love in death sublime
Soars on sovran wings,
While the world and time
Fade like shadowy things.
“Love upon his lip
Hovers loath to part;
Death's benignant grip
Fastens on his heart.”

Look, a victor hies
Bloody from the fight,

And a woman's eyes
 Greet him in the night—
Softly from the skies
 Like sidereal light!
 “Love is all in all,
 Life and death are great.
Bring a purple pall:
 Bury him in state.”

SONG

CLOSES and courts and lanes
 Devious, clustered thick,
The thoroughfare, mains and drains,
 People and mortar and brick,
Wood, metal, machinery, brains,
 Pen and composing-stick:
 Fleet Street, but exquisite flame
 In the nebula once ere day and night
 Began their travail, or earth became,
 And all was passionate light.

Networks of wire overland,
 Conduits under the sea,
Aerial message from strand to strand
 By lightning that travels free,
Hither in haste to hand
 Tidings of destiny:
 These tingling nerves of the world's affairs
 Deliver remorseless, rendering still
 The fall of empires, the price of shares,
 The record of good and ill.

Tidal the traffic goes
 Citywards out of the town:
 Townwards the evening ebb o'erflows
 This highway of old renown,
 When the fog-woven curtains close,
 And the urban night comes down,
 Where souls are split and intellects spent
 O'er news vociferant near and far,
 From Hesperus hard to the Orient,
 From dawn to the evening star.

This is the royal refrain
 That burdens the boom and the thud
 Of omnibus, mobus, wain,
 And the hoofs on the beaten mud,
 From the Griffin at Chancery Lane
 To the portal of old King Lud—
 Fleet Street, diligent night and day,
 Of news the mart and the burnished hearth,
 Seven hundred paces of narrow way,
 A notable bit of the earth.

ST. MICHAEL'S MOUNT

ST. MICHAEL's MOUNT, the tidal isle,
 In May with daffodils and lilies
 Is kirtled gorgeously a while
 As ne'er another English hill is:
 About the precipices cling
 The rich renascence robes of Spring.

Her gold and silver, nature's gifts,
 The prodigal with both hands showers:

Oh, not in patches, not in drifts
But round and round, a mount of flowers—
Of lilies and of daffodils,
The envy of the other hills.

And on the lofty summit looms
The castle: none could build or plan it.
The foursquare foliage springs and blooms,
The piled elaborate flower of granite,
That not the sun can wither; no,
Nor any tempest overthrow.

POEMS OF THE NEW ROMANTICISM

DEDICATION TO THE GENERATION KNOCKING AT THE DOOR

BREAK—break it open; let the knocker rust:
Consider no “shalt not,” and no man’s “must”:
And, being entered, promptly take the lead,
Setting aside tradition, custom, creed;
Nor watch the balance of the huckster’s beam;
Declare your hardiest thoughts, your proudest dream:
Await no summons; laugh at all rebuff;
High hearts and youth are destiny enough.
The mystery and the power enshrined in you
Are old as time and as the moment new:
And none but you can tell what part you play,
Nor can you tell until you make assay,
For this alone, this always, will succeed,
The miracle and magic of the deed.

THE TESTAMENT OF A MAN FORBID

MANKIND has cast me out. When I became
So close a comrade of the day and night,
Of earth and of the seasons of the year,
And so submissive in my love of life
And study of the world that I unknew
The past and names renowned, religion, art,
Inventions, thoughts, and deeds, as men unknow
What good and evil fate befell their souls

Before their bodies gave them residence,
(How the old letter haunts the spirit still!
As if the soul were other than the sum
The body's powers make up—a golden coin,
Amount of so much silver, so much bronze!)
I said, rejoicing, "Now I stand erect,
And am that which I am." Compassionate
I watched a motley crowd beside me bent
Beneath unsteady burdens, toppling loads
Of volumes, news and lore antique, that showered
About their ears to be re-edified
On aching heads and shoulders overtasked.
Yet were these hodmen cheerful, ignorant
Of woe whose character it is to seem
Predestined and an honourable care:
They read their books, re-read, and read again;
They balanced libraries upon their polls,
And tottered through the valley almost prone,
But certain they were nobler than the beasts.
I saw besides in fields and cities hordes
Of haggard people soaked in filth and slime
Wherewith they fed the jaded earth the while
Their souls of ordure stank; automata
That served machines whose tyrannous revolt
Enthralled their lords, as if the mistletoe
Displaying mournful gold and wintry pearls
On sufferance, should enchant the forest oak
To be its accident and parasite;
Wretches and monsters that were capable
Of joy and sorrow once, their bodies numbed,
Their souls deflowered, their reason disendowed
By noisome trades, or at the furnaces,
In drains and quarries and the sunless mines;
And myriads upon myriads, human still
Without redemption drudging till they died.

Aware how multitudes of those enslaved
No respite sought, but squandered leisure hours
Among the crowd whose choice or task it was
To balance libraries upon their polls,
I laughed a long low laugh with weeping strung,
A rosary of tears, to see mankind
So dauntless and so dull, and cried at last,
“Good people, honest people, cast them off
And stand erect, for few are helped by books.
What! will you die crushed under libraries?
Lo! thirty centuries of literature
Have curved your spines and overborne your brains!
Off with it—all of it! Stand up; behold
The earth; life, death, and day and night!
Think not the things that have been said of these;
But watch them and be excellent, for men
Are what they contemplate.”

They mocked me: “Yah!
The fox who lost his tail! Though you are crazed
We have our wits about us.”

“Nay,” I cried;
“There was besides an ape who lost his tail
That he might change to man. Undo the past!
The rainbow reaches Asgard now no more;
Olympus stands untenanted; the dead
Have their serene abode in earth itself,
Our womb, our nurture, and our sepulchre.
Expel the sweet imaginings, profound
Humanities and golden legends, forms
Heroic, beauties, tripping shades, embalmed
Through hallowed ages in the fragrant hearts
And generous blood of men; the climbing thoughts
Whose roots ethereal grope among the stars,

Whose passion-flowers perfume eternity,
Weed out and tear, scatter and tread them down;
Dismantle and dilapidate high heaven.
It has been said: Ye must be born again.
I say to you: Men must be that they are.
Philosophy, the juggling dupe who finds
Astounding meanings in the Universe,
Commodiously secreted by himself;
Religion, that appoints the soul a flight
Empyrean—hoods its vision then and plucks
Its plumes, its arching pinions tethers down
To flap about a laystall; Art sublime,
The ancient harlot of the ages, she
Whose wig of golden tinct, enamelled face
And cushioned bosom rivet glowing looks,
Whose scented flatulence diviner seems
Than dulcet breath of girls who keep their trysts
In hawthorn brakes devoutly, when the sap
Bestirs the troubled forest and the winds
Solace the moonlit earth with whispered news:
Religion, Art, Philosophy—this God,
This Beauty, this Idea men have filled
The world with, study still, and still adore,
Are only segments of the spirit's tail
We must outgrow, if spirit would ascend,
(Let Spirit be the word for body-and-soul!
Will language ne'er be fused and forged anew?)
And quit the withering life of fear and shame,
Of agony and pitiful desire
To reign untailed in heaven hereafter—Laugh!
The changing image seizes you. Or thus:
This Beauty, this Divinity, this Thought,
This hallowed bower and harvest of delight
Whose roots ethereal seemed to clutch the stars,
Whose amaranths perfumed eternity,

Is fixed in earthly soil enriched with bones
Of used-up workers; fattened with the blood
Of prostitutes, the prime manure; and dressed
With brains of madmen and the broken hearts
Of children. Understand it, you at least
Who toil all day and writhe and groan all night
With roots of luxury, a cancer struck
In every muscle: out of you it is
Cathedrals rise and Heaven blossoms fair;
You are the hidden putrefying source
Of beauty and delight, of leisured hours,
Of passionate loves and high imaginings;
You are the dung that keeps the roses sweet.
I say, uproot it; plough the land; and let
A summer-fallow sweeten all the World."

With mud bespattered, bruised with staves and
stoned—
“You called us dung!”—me from their midst they
drove.
Alone I went in darkness and in light,
Colour and sound attending on my steps,
And life and death, the ministers of men,
My constant company. But in my heart
Of hearts I longed for human neighbourhood,
And bent my pride to win men back again.
I came, a penitent; and on my knees
I climbed their stairs; I thundered at their doors,
And cried, “I am your brother; in your wrath,
As brethren should, destroy me; at your hands
I must have life or death: I cannot bear
The outcast’s fate.”

They bade me then proclaim
How seemed the World now in my penitence.

But when I rose to speak, their palaces,
Their brothels, slums, cathedrals, theatres,
Asylums, factories, exchanges, banks,
The patched-up world of heirlooms, hand-me-downs
That worm and moth dispute, of make-believe,
Of shoddy, pinchbeck, sweepings of the street,
Of war disguised, of unconcealed chicane,
Of shrivelled drudge and swollen parvenu,
Turned at my glance into that murky vale
Where patient hodmen on their rounded backs
Sustained the thought of thirty centuries,
Where multitudes of slaves renounced their rest
To balance libraries upon their polls;
Or to that giant oaf (for vision shifts
The world about like winds that shape the clouds)
Whose spiritual tail, most awkward now
That breeches hide the rump, is cherished still
With ursine piety; or to that bower
Of Heaven's Delight whose barbed and cancerous roots
Are struck in earthly soil enriched with blood
Of men and women. As I saw I said:
(How could I else!) and bade them as before
"Arise! Uproot the pleasance; plough the land,
And let the World lie fallow. Only then
Can any seed of change have room to grow."

They yelled upon me and their missiles flew;
But one arose to represent the World,
And at his nod their clamour ceased. He said:
"There is no harbour here for such as you.
You know not what you say nor understand
How you have hurt yourself. You cannot—fool,
And answered as befits!—contrive to make
A monkey human by caudatomy;
Nor can humanity transcend itself

By shearing off its spirit at the root.
That of the tail is false analogy.
Man springs from out the past: his tap-roots pierce
The strata of the ages, drawing strength
From every generation, every cult.
The scission of the smallest rootlet harms
His growth."

Then turning he adjured the crowd:
"Be warned or be accursed! This monster steps
Beyond the scope and furthest bound of man:
Mere mirror is his brain; his heart, mere husk.
A waft of death comes from him. Would you live
Indifferent to your own delight, unmoved
By kindred sorrow, and oblivious
Of all your fathers did, then give him ear,
And quit forever the resourceful past.
I know you will not. What! Some pause to think?
Resort now to the knife and you will find
'Tis not an unbecoming, useless tail
You sever manfully to be yourselves,
But suicide of soul that you commit."

To me: "You ask for life or death from us,
Because you cannot bear the outcast's fate.
We disregard your claim: what you can bear
Is no concern of ours: we cast you out.
Your well-earned portion of the Universe
Is isolation and eternal death.
Cut off, an alien, here you have no home:
No face shall ever gladden at your step,
No woman long to see you. Get you hence,
And seek the desert; or since your soul is dead,
Return your body to the earth at once,
And let resolved oblivion triumph now."

Gladly the World approved with hand and voice;
And one, a woman, offered me a knife:
"And let resolved oblivion triumph now,"
She echoed. Had it been my will to die,
I should not then have made the sacrifice
At the World's bidding; but I chose to live,
For while I live the victory is mine.

So I went forth for evermore forbid
The company of men. The Universe,
Systems and suns and all that breathes and is,
Appeared at first in that dread solitude
Only the momentary, insolent
Irruption of a glittering fantasy
Into the silent, empty Infinite.
But eyes and ears were given to me again:
With these a man may do; with these, endure.

I haunt the hills that overlook the sea.
Here in the Winter like a meshwork shroud
The sifted snow reveals the perished land,
And powders wisps of knotgrass dank and dead
That trail like faded locks on mouldering skulls
Unearthed from shallow burial. With the Spring
The west-wind thunders through the budding hedge
That stems the furrowed steep—a sound of drums,
Of gongs and muted cymbals; yellow breasts
And brown wings whirl in gusts, fly chaffering, drop,
And surge in gusts again; in wooded coombs
The hyacinth with purple diapers
The russet beechmast, and the cowslips hoard
Their virgin gold in lucent chalices;

The sombre furze, all suddenly attired
In rich brocade, the enterprise in chief
And pageant of the season, overrides
The rolling land and girds the bosomed plain
That strips her green robe to a saffron shore
And steps into the surf where threads and scales
And arabesques of blue and emerald wave
Begin to damascene the iron sea;
While faint from upland fold and covert peal
The sheep-bell and the cuckoo's mellow chime.
Then when the sovereign light from which we came,
Of earth enamoured, bends most questioning looks,
I watch the land grow beautiful, a bride
Transfigured with desire of her great lord.
Betrothal-music of the tireless larks,
Heaven-high, heaven-wide possesses all the air,
And wreathes the shining lattice of the light
With chaplets, purple clusters, vintages
Of sound from the first fragrant breath and first
Tear-sprinkled blush of Summer to the deep
Transmuted fire, the smouldering golden moons,
The wine-stained dusk of Autumn harvest-ripe;
And I behold the period of Time,
When Memory shall devolve and Knowledge lapse
Wanting a subject, and the willing earth
Leap to the bosom of the sun to be
Pure flame once more in a new time begun:
Here, as I pace the pallid doleful hills
And serpentine declivities that creep
Unhonoured to the ocean's shifting verge,
Or where with prouder curve and greener sward,
Surmounting peacefully the restless tides,
The cliffted escarpment ends in stormclad strength.

MAMMON'S ADDRESS TO THE CRUCIFIX

Out of this agony, O crucified,
(Vengeance, the lust of it, and pride of birth,
Sick doubt of man's surpassing destiny
Scummed off like dross!) I tap the liquid ore,
Refined and new, the element I am,
And cast it in the very mould of me,
Metal and furnace, fire and foundry, knowing
Myself at last in my own image made,
The loftiest mind and freshest thought of time.
Sad Christ of pity and sin, the prosperous world,
The world of understanding, worlds of joy,
Warriors and lovers, valour, passion, might,
And that wide world of slavery, fertile ground
Wherein our puissance strikes its burrowing roots,
Begin to find you out; and I—unheard
I breathe it here, the secret of my soul—
I am jealous of you, Jesus of Nazareth.
Not Cæsar makes me malcontent: his name
Is all that lasts of him, Kaiser or Tsar,
And of the almanac an annual twelfth.
Now not Napoleon stirs my rancour; he,
Decapitated after death, became
Only a braggart game for prodigals,
The noise he counted on to send his deeds
In thunder echoing through the vaults of time
Abated to a foolish syllable. . . .

But you, oh you,
Immanuel, Saviour, God and Son of God,
That hang there vainly human on a tree,
The sight of you distils all passion, thought,
Delight, desire, imagination, power,

To one essential, constant alkahest,
Ethereal jealousy—omnipotent
Dissolvent nothing known can saturate,
In whose divulsive flood and fiery wave
Even Christendom shall melt, and be no more . . .
Millions on millions of the highest hearts,
The noblest breeds of men, called after Christ! . . .

A tide of envy labours in my soul
To whelm and end all that as solvents melt
The densest metals, as the summer seas
Consume the arctic drift, floe, glacier, berg.
Bethink you, Christ: the world, adult at last,
Wearies of you? Oh, but you stood it out
Longer than Woden, Zeus, or Jupiter
By many a period! Centuries overdue,
Sheer change, indifferent save to be,
Accumulates stupendous force; while men
Restore, recover, plaster, putty, patch
With systems economic, schemes, reforms,
Not knowing that the thing they mend, outworn,
Beyond the tinker's craft, is past repair,
That what was life and breath and flower and fruit,
Is mildew now and blight, disease and death,
That Christendom's the matter with the world.

THE NEW UNIVERSE

GUENDOLEN:

My dream was to conceive the Son of Man,
To be once more the mother of the Lord.
What will I bear now, Mammon? Antichrist?

MAMMON:

Nor Christ, nor Antichrist, divinest maid:
 Greater than either shall our children be:
 For that which I beget and you conceive
 (We two, the first of women, the first of men,
 To be self-consciously, what every pair,
 Insect or mammoth—or field or forest—are
 Unwittingly, the procreant Universe):
 That which we make together is the whole
 Illimitable Universe itself.
 Nothing is greater anywhere than us:
 We form the matter of the furthest star,
 The matter of the earth, the sea, the sky:
 We are the pregnant lightning and the light;
 The vapours, metals, dusts that lightning bears:-
 Lightning—the lightning, blood, ethereal seed,
 The poles, the blossom of the Universe,
 Sheer being, unembodied sex and womb:
 And light, the rainbow soul of matter, pure
 As rapt virginity, elaborate
 As love that strains the essences of life;
 We are the subtile ether, unperceived,
 Omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent,
 Eternal, formless, labyrinthine space
 Wherein the suns are stelled, whereof they are. . .

Dispose of waste

Becomingly—ever more decently
 As knowledge grows; but have it out, and hence. .

A traveller of the Isles,

Your famous Gulliver, in Laputa found
 A yellow-faced projector up to the eyes
 In merd, pursuing the most ancient study
 Of all Laputan science, how to reduce

The excrement of men to food again:
 A symbol of your socialists, who smear
 The proud and wealthy world with nastiness,
 Still fumbling at the emunctories of the state
 (I mean its economic processes)
 And churning up the stuff of the latrines
 (The broken men, the skilless and unskilled,
 The unemployed, the unemployable)
 In quest of menstruums to decoct from dung
 The sweetness of the rose, spindles to twist
 A silken fibre from putrescence, art
 And a cunning culture, a magic spell
 To rear in filth the unsown staff of life,
 To raise the dead and make perdition pay. . . .

You have been told for twenty centuries
 That that which is behind the Universe,
 Its maker, God, or some obscurant will,
 Transcends substantial things; and psychic powers,
 Imagination, thought—the essences
 Material of matter—have squandered craft
 Enough to make another Universe
 In building up nonentity, miscalled
 The world of spirit! There is no such world:—
 I speak to minds of every calibre,
 And would be understood:—no spirit world;
 No world but this, which is the Universe,
 The whole, great, everlasting Universe.
 And you are it—you, there, that sweep the streets,
 You that make the music, you that make the laws,
 You that bear children, you that fade unloved.
 Oh, if there be one here despised and mean,
 Oppressed with self-contempt and cursed with fear,
 I say to him:—Not anywhere at all
 Is there a greater being than you—just you:

You are the lustre of a million suns—
The fuel of their fires, your flesh and blood;
And all the orbs that strew eternal space
Are less than you, for you can feel, can know,
Can think, can comprehend the sum of things:
You are the infinite Universe itself
Become intelligent and capable.
Grasp it and hold it in your heart of hearts,
That nothing lies behind, nothing at all,
Except the ether woven from bourne to bourne—
If there be spatial bournes—continually
Evolving lightning, chrysosperm of space,
Electric lust for ever unconsumed,
Twisexed fertility that begets and breeds
The divers elements whereof we are,
And all the suns and all the galaxies:
Nothing of thought or oversoul behind,
About, above; but you and I in front,
The intellect, the passion and the dream,
The flower and perfume of the Universe.
You have been told for twenty centuries
That man upon a transient isthmus stands
Between the oceans of eternity;
And that the earth is but an academe
Where the poor human acolyte prepares
For joy in Heaven or penal fires of Hell,
Or here begin consecutive rebirths
That shall in other worlds perfection gain.
I say the earth itself is Heaven and Hell,
That every heart-beat is the crack of doom,
And every passing moment the judgment-day!
That here and now we have eternity.
Time is not; never was: a juggling trick,
A very simple one, of three tossed balls,
The sun, the moon, the earth, to cheat our sense

With day and night and seasons of the year.
This is eternity: here once in space
The Universe is conscious in you and me;
And if the earth and all that is therein
Were now to end, the task, the pain, the woe,
The travail of the long millennial tides
Since life began, would like a pleasant fancy
Fade in the thoughtless memory of matter;
Because in me the infinite Universe
Achieves at last entire self-consciousness,
And could be well content to sleep again
For ever, still evolving in its sleep
Systems and constellations and tracts of suns.
But I would have you all even as I am!
I want you to begin a world with me,
Not for posterity, but for ourselves.
Prophets have told that there has seized on us
An agony of labour and design
For those that shall come after such as no age
Endured before. I, Mammon, tell you, No!
We have come after! We are posterity!
And time it is we had another world
Than this in which mankind excreted soul,
Sexless and used and immaterial,
Upon the very threshold of the sun,
To wonder why the earth should stink so! Men
Belov'd, women adored, my people, come,
Devise with me a world worth living in—
Not for our children and our children's children,
But for our own renown, our own delight!
All lofty minds, all pride, all arrogance,
All passion, all excess, all craft, all power,
All measureless imagination, come!
I am your King; come, make the world with me!

ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEOLOGY

GUENDOLEN:

Indeed it seems, and is, a miracle:
 One step in utter darkness, utter fear,
 And Christendom is not. It never was,
 But as an aberration or a dream.
 We can be neither Christian nor Antichristian,
 Theist nor atheist, nor any name,
 Mohammedan or Buddhist: we are earth
 And air, carbon and phosphorus and sulphur,
 The lightning, and the ether—like the stars.
 We are the whole great universe itself
 Become intelligent and capable.
 The Universe in love!—that's what I am:
 And you, poor Christian friend!—what did you say?—
 An atheist's concubine. No need have I
 To talk forgiveness: while you live and move
 In Christendom you must impute all evil,
 Being nothing till you come among the stars.
 Then will you see all that was ever meant
 By God and spirit, heaven, hell and other world
 Drop off the Universe like a little scab
 From a healed scratch upon a baby's cheek. . . .

TAMBERSKELVER:

Therefore we begin
 The cerebral secretion of a God,
 And, uncreated, consciously create
 Divinity in likeness of ourselves. . . .

MAMMON:

I in myself
 Will show mankind how dead are all the lies
 The other-worldlings forged and foisted in

Amidst the immaculate material truth
Like false decretals in the canon law.
Men may do what they list without a thought:
Matter of brain and blood, good food, good drink,
Employment of the muscles, of the nerves,
With high imaginings, superb designs,
Superb exploits, sound sleep and pleasant dreams. . . .

Amassed maturity that clogs the mind
Is sin essential: set your life abroach;
Have all the fountains playing, the lanterns lit;
Give matter scope; let the whole tide of things
Throng through you; be the channel and the bridge,
The vein, the artery and the rhythmic heart,
The rapid current the ether loves—
A man with every fibre strained to do
And every faculty in exercise. . . .

Before the world began

The vapours, metals, earths that integrate
Your bodies, minds and souls:—(and by your souls
I mean the whole machinery of power,
Vital, emotional and cerebral,
Transmuted from bisexual energy
Of lightning and the loadstone, from the force
Expansible of gases, from intense
Alchemical desires, miraculous
Irradiations, metamorphoses:
And from the everlasting passionate
Molecular attraction, pulsing strong
Even in the matter of a mendicant,
With that recondite, interatomic play
Electrons manage in secluded courts,
So infinitely small that elfin bowers
Beside them seem the spacious vault of heaven):—

Was as it is—before the world began?—
Before a single stitch of lightning pierced
The sides of darkness and ethereal space,
While all the systems, galaxies and suns,
Dissolved in empyrean slumber, dreamed
Unconscious dreams of orbèd splendour flung
Athwart the firmaments in vast array! . . .

The wildest thoughts of men

Are true as true, for matter cannot lie,
And men and thoughts are matter: material truth
Behind the immaterial symbol hides,
As priests conceive of God behind the veil.
Self-consciousness, imagination, soul
Are forms of matter as the lightning is,
As gold and phosphorus and gases are—
Matter eternal, diverse, mutable.
Like all the mythic intercourse of Heaven,
Adonai's commerce with the virgins means
That man is more than man, and with his bride
Engenders righteously the manifold
Illimitable universe itself,
Continuing in sense and consciousness
The ether and the substance of the stars.
Immaculate conception intimates
The purity of women in all their functions—
Wonderful partners, virginal every month,
Sweet votarists of the moon. Celestial glory?
Remembrances of being unbegun
In old ethereal eternities.
The intolerable tragedy of Hell?
Encaustic records of the pristine fire
In every passionate ion branded: these,
Achieving consciousness in man, reveal
His pure material nature. You exalt

The Host, and eat the body of the Lord
In ecstasy of adoration: great,
And in the very essence of it true!
How just and right that out of all the Christian
Travail of Calvary, and Martyrdoms
Forgotten by the thousand, this issue leapt
To sheer pre-eminence:—"Is that bless'd bread.
The body of God or not?" The body of God!
It is the sun, the earth, the elements,
Sirius and Aldebaran and Mazzaroth,
The ether, and the lightning and the light,
The whole illimitable universe. . . .

Carbon, and those aerial potentates—
Azote, which men call nitrogen; the virile
Sultan of all the elements, oxygen;
The brilliant vapour of the hottest stars,
The lady of the water: principal
Components of the visible Universe,
And the main fibres of infinitude,
Are we, our food, our drink; and every meal
Is eucharist, and every dining-room
A temple. . . .

Without God man's a beast.
Back to the beast! We must get back to the beast:
"Get thee behind me, God!" shall be our cry.
From lower forms of life out of the ether,
By way of lightning and the nebula,
The king of all the beasts arrived at last.
There I begin again as if no time
Had ever been: no metaphysical
Consideration, myth or wonderworld
Installed in space by sorrow and ignorance;
No moral law insidiously wrought

To play the pandar to malignity;
 No gyves of right and wrong to shackle power. . . .

I know your spirit-world
 Better than any prophet, poet, priest,
 Philosopher, occultist, mystic, seer.
 Hear me expound your dual universe:—
 Man is a spirit, and his various life,
 A bodying forth of the invisible;
 The Universe and forms of time and space—
 The garment and the symbolism of God;
 The elements, the stars, earth and its brood—
 The self-analysis, precipitation,
 Pomp and deployment of the absolute:
 The visible's the immaterial;
 And only spirit's matter and momentous.
 A noble Universe whose furthest nook
 Is still a suburb of the City of God;
 Where every star and every blade of grass,
 Where every pulse and every thought reveals
 The hallowed presence of divinity! . . .

No God; no spirit; only matter. God?
 The cowardice of men flung forth to fill
 With welcome shadow an imagined void—
 Which never was, which by no chance can be.
 The unconscious ether fills the universe,
 Omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent:
 No interstice in matter anywhere
 Even for the daintiest elf of other world;
 And in the infinite no interval
 To harbour alien immaterial dreams. . . .

Time's a lie,
 And space a trick. Eternity's the truth:

Infinitude, the all-dynamic vast,
Mystery of mysteries, known to any one,
The everlasting durability
Of the immeasurable universe:
For all is matter, all is mystery, all
Is known: we are the universe become
Self-conscious; and nothing anywhere exists
Not us. All men are great, all men: unmade,
Incomparable, immeasurable, free—
The eternal Universe become self-conscious. . . .

We ourselves are fate;
We are the universe; we are all that is:
Outside of us nothing that is not us
Can be at all. No room! The universe
Is full of us, the matter of the stars;
The all-pervading ether seen as light,
Elaborate purity of rainbows; heard
As music, woven of elemental sounds;
And smelt in perfume, the poetry of flowers
Exhaled from sex, which in all plants and beasts
Secretes and sows the ethereal universe.
Seen in the light, in music heard, and smelt
In subtle odour of a thousand flowers,
In us the ether consciously becomes
Imagination, thought, religion, art.
We are the ether, we are the universe,
We are eternity: not sense, not spirit,
But matter; but the whole become self-conscious.
Whatever Heaven there is, whatever Hell,
Here now we have it; and I cannot wait
On God, the nothing, and his damned event
That mocked the world for sixty centuries;
Nor will I linger eating out my heart
While this new proxy of divinity

Your specious evolution, blunders on
From tedious age to age. I'll carve the world
In my own image, I, the first of men
To comprehend the greatness of mankind;
I'll melt the earth and cast it in my mould,
The form and beauty of the universe. . . .

When solar space—

One modest atom of the universe,
Five thousand millions of our useless miles
Diametrically measured:—when this was still
A-hatching, every time a split-new planet
Burst from the teeming and the spiral sun,
A pang of terror rent the elder orbs,
And every asteroid and comet swerved
Unconsciously dismayed; and so in us
When virginal, momentous deeds are done,
And sudden, awful thoughts in action sphered,
A perturbation palsies intellect,
Maddens the fancy, dislocates the soul,
Imperilling the assembled powers that form
Our being; but when the naked deed had reached
Its orbit, and begun to circle, free
In the all-containing ether, our realm in space
Is richer, greater by the new-born star,
Our rank and system in the universe
Of stabler equipoise, superior note,
And thought and fancy, sense and soul renewed
As in the dawn and freshness of our day. . . .

No pause for me henceforth until the end,
Or till I win this world from other world,
And set upon the throne material man
So long deposed by phantoms of his fear.

HELL

A WHILE I slaked my thirsty sight with draughts
Of heavenly vision till harmonious news
Assailed my ears with music, deeply stained
And sweeter than the scent of asphodel:
It seemed inherent in the empyreal air,
Attuned my pitch to Heaven's, transpierced my soul
With rapture at the thought of agony,
And made me search the depths for Tartarus
Where those stupendous pangs of wind-driven wheels,
Recoiling stones, of water borne in sieves,
Of famished mouths with ghostly delicates
Deluded momentily, were wont to wring
Ixion, Sisyphus, the impious host,
And those sweet fifty, all save one, who slew
Their virgin bridegrooms in their wedding-beds.
Nowhere beholding these antiquer sights,
My eyes began to ransack space for Hell,
And Christian torments of the damned. I looked,
And looked again to see the City of Dis
Where heretics their heresies regret,
Or scorn eternal pain, regretting nought,
Entombed in sepulchres of fire, unpaved
Till judgment, to be sealed for ever then;
Or the deep-sighing forest ominous
Where suicides like thorns and briars grow,
Uncouth and barren wildings, rookery
Obscene of mongrel birds; or to o'erhear
That storm instinct with lamentation shrill,
Where souls of tender lovers whirled about
In utter darkness on the unstable air,
Uplift unhallowed voices loud against
The withering blast and terror of their flight.

Like a swift pang of Hell it stung my mind,
"There is no Hell! All these courageous ones—
Ixion, lover of the Queen of Heaven,
The Phrygian humorist who cooked strange flesh
To test immortal palates, Corinth's lord
Who mocked at Death and laid him by the heels,
The nuptial homicides of Argos, strong
To keep their maidenheads for whom they chose,
Arrogant Farinata, the Capuan, blind,
Betrayed, but master of his fate, and all
Who paired unwed, their seedtime having come,
Are here with me in everlasting joy!"

But that sweet music, in my heart of hearts
As vibrant as an octave bell that hums
Harmonic mirth to hear his neighbour chime,
Betokened agony, as certainly
As braided strains of mundane sound denote
A pitiful ambition-broken gang
Of drilled executants, an orchestra;
Announced a Hell, however, peopled, ruled
And wrought to such delight. Assured, I scanned
The wide domain of Heaven, and in the midst
Beheld a seated figure, richly clad
In purple. Golden-haired, with luminous eyes
And deep, he played upon a dazzling range
Of adamantine notes; chromatic mail
Of chrysoberyl, ruby, sardonyx,
Topaz and emerald, and many a gem
Unknown, plated the intermediate keys.
A loom of strings or grove of tuneful pipes
I nowhere saw; only in Heaven's midst
The jewelled keyboard on a jasper plinth,
And that celestial one who played thereon.

At random glancing, by the music held
In ecstasy, I marked, far off and faint
As from the earth the galaxy appears,
A glimmering colour diaper the light
Wherein the ethereal bowers of Heaven were hung.
Thrusting my whetted eyes athwart the abyss—
For on the instant I foreboded Hell—
Importunate, my vision first defined
A nebula that girt the firmament;
Then like a tapestry seemed the thickening haze,
An arras-cloth with human eyes embossed,
With glaring eyes; thereafter as a cliff,
Precipitous it hung, a bastioned steep,
Encompassing afar the golden clime,
And vigilant with a million million eyes.
At last, my gaze dynamic grown, I saw
That this remote environment of Heaven,
Tier upon tier of flesh from base to crown,
This human amphitheatre was Hell
Itself, constructed of its denizens.
My knitted brows and roofed hand swept the vast
Eternal cirque of heinous agony
Still as an icy frontier in the moon,
Except that groups and terraces of folk
Distended myriad mouths for every key
The gracious player struck: like drifts and flaws
Of wandering air that ripple summer tides,
The transient multitudinous gape and cry
Flickered about the pallid wall. I knew
As though myself had been the artificer,
The whole design; in every bone and nerve,
In every sinew and pulse of those that built
Perdition up, the faculty of Hell,
More vehement than flame, intensely wrought
Perpetual and intolerable woe;

And, subtler than the torturer's poison used
To palsy action and invigorate sense
In bloody gropings at the roots of life,
Mortised each body-and-soul in ordered rank,
Inhibiting spontaneous deed or sound.

The gracious player on the jewelled keys
By power celestial loosed with every touch
Imprisoned horror in a massive cry
Tuned to the fingered note, while winnowing space
Mellowed the shriek of women and the roar
Of men into immortal harmony,
The ineluctable beatitude
That moulded the demeanour of the blest,
And lit their faces with eternal looks
Subtle and sweet of malice gratified,
The salt of beauty and the exquisite
Original of all felicity.

Materials of Hell? The altruists;
Agnostics; dreamers, idiots, cripples, dwarfs;
All kinds of cowards who eluded fact;
Dwellers in legend, burrowers in myth;
The merciful, the meek and mild, the poor
In spirit; Christians who in very deed
Were Christians; pessimistic celibates;
The feeble minds; the souls called beautiful;
The slaves, the labourers, the mendicants;
Survivors of defeat; the little clans
That posed and fussed, in ignominy left
By apathetic powers; the greater part
Of all the swarthy, all the tawny tribes;
Degenerates; the desultory folk
In pleasure, art, vocation, commerce, craft;
And all deniers of the will to live,
And all who shunned the strife for wealth and power:
For every soul that had been damned on earth

Was damned in Hell—set there, replete with pangs,
To watch eternally; the infinite
Delight of Heaven, extorted from himself
And those beside him in the rampire built.
Eternal justice, it was good to see
Dives in Heaven and Lazarus in Hell
Maugre two thousand years of Christendom!

A dream of blasphemous inspiration? No;
If Justice is, then there is Justice now;
What is, will always be, if Justice is.

Do I believe in Heaven and Hell? I do;
We have them here; the world is nothing else.
Beauty and power and splendour and delight
Of chosen ones, elect ere Time began,
In loathsomeness, debility, disgrace,
Humiliation, travail, terror, woe,
Of multitudes, of myrmidons, of all
The labourers, soldiers, servants, rooted deep:
He is a slave: a prisoner: damned: in Hell,
Whose daily bread depends on toil approved.
For me, I clambered into Heaven at once
And stayed there; joined the warfare of the times
In corner, trust, and syndicate: upheaved
A furrow, hissing through the angry world,
A redhot ploughshare in a frozen glebe,
And reaped my millions long before my prime.
Then, being English, one of the elect
Above all folks, within me fate grew strong.
The authentic mandate of imperial doom
Silenced the drowsy lullaby of love,
(Though now my turbid blood and nerves disused
Complain of mystery unrevealed, and haunt
Imagination day and night with looks—

With beckoning looks, soft arms and fragrant breath;
 For even in Heaven, each ransomed soul frequents
 A private, an inevitable Hell!)
 Undid my simple, immature design,
 And made me—What! tenfold a criminal?
 No other name for Hastings, Clive, and me!
 I broke your slothful dream of folded wings,
 Of work achieved and empire circumscribed,
 Dispelled the treacherous flatteries of peace,
 And thrust you in your dull despite
 The one thing needful, half a continent
 Of habitable land! The English Hell
 For ever crowds upon the English Heaven.
 Secure your birthright; set the world at naught;
 Confront your fate; regard the naked deed;
 Enlarge your Hell; preserve it in repair;
 Only a splendid Hell keeps Heaven fair.

THE GODS IN PERDITION

WITHOUT a pang I died; but, shrieking, waked
 In the last Hell remaining, Hell unknown
 To men before my visit, appalling Hell,
 The Hell of Deity where Other World
 Intolerable agony endured.

Although the instantaneousness of Hell
 Extorted sudden outcry, yet the thought
 That immaterial falsehood of the spirit
 Had not escaped; but that the gods themselves
 A fierier flame, a fiercer torture knew
 Than any penalty infernal dealt
 The human victims of their wrath divine,

Inventors, patrons, connoisseurs of Hell,
Was as a drop of water on my tongue,
A chord of music, and a breath of wind
Amid the dismal noise, the withering heat,
The awful restlessness, the live despair.

Beside me on the threshold the goddess stood,
As young, as full of zest, and as divine
As when she passed me on the mountain-top.
I also in the splendour of my youth.
Entered the dread inferno of the gods:
For, that the anguish there might still surpass
The utmost pain in every other hell,
The spirit and strength of all the denizens,
Restored at once, were to the height maintained
By the pure flame they breathed, the atmosphere
Being also nurture and stimulant, and one
Exhaustive torment of that shrine of woe:
That all the essences of Other World
Should breathe, should feed on Hell like plants on air,
And should become in every artery, nerve,
Secretion, organ, bone and muscle, Hell,
Insufferable Hell, was the supreme
Distinction, the redundancy superb
In hellishness that made the Hell of the Gods
Pre-eminent Hell. But over and above
The general torture native in the air—
So stringent and imbuing that the might
Combined, the majesty and pride of gods,
The highest, Jove, Poseidon, Mulciber,
Ormuzd and Ahriman, Woden, Surtur, Mars,
Could not have borne in silence a moment's throë—
Each individual, from the daintiest elf,
That fed on perfume once and bathed in dew,
To Cyclopean figures vast, of yore

The armourers and farriers of the gods,
Endured the unendurable, impaled
Against a towering cliff of adamant,
Sheer as a waterfall and smooth as glass,
Broad as the bastion of an island realm,
And topaz-hued by reflex of the flame
That filled the wide and lofty vault of Hell,
Its atmosphere: impalement manifold,
The pegs and bolts, the skewers and beams
Being of the soul of metal, an element
Unknown on earth, that where it pierces lives
An aching life metallic, in pain itself,
And to the wounded spirit imparting power
Transcendent to experience agonies
That, felt less keenly, with a single pang
Had ended every god. Supine or prone
The fairies, kobolds, dwarfs, by pins and nails
Transfixed like butterflies and beetles, screamed
With stretched mouths, wings a-buzz and wriggling limbs;
And though they wrenched and wrung their bodies,—they,
And every sufferer there, incessantly—
The puncture of the impalement sucked the stake
Like a fierce mouth, such was the energy
Constrictive in the magic metal lodged.
Titans and Thurses huge, dropped from the height,
On ganches pined—such groups of barbs and spikes
As on the walls of orient cities clutched
The mangled malefactor, dying long
In hideous misery: through the bowels thrust,
Hooked by a leg and in both shoulders griped,
The storm-leviathan, enormous Thrym,
Terrific anguish from his cavernous maw
Uttered continually; beside him hung
Uncouthly by the head, his eyehole pierced
By other malice than the wandering Greek's,

His bulk contorted and immanely trussed
On giant prongs that dug through either thigh,
And, curving, gashed his midriff, ocean's son,
The cloud-high Polyphemus, writhed and roared.
Upon a skewer, that through their navels stuck,
Vulcan and Mars, with Venus wedged between,
Bellowed discordant frenzy as they bit
And clawed each other. Juno stitched to Jove
By latticed scythes—austerely, back to back—
Bayed like a she-wolf maddening at the moon,
While her great consort's lion throat unstopped
Pealed out the diapason of all woe:
Chronos with Rhea, Baal with Ashtaroth,
Woden with Freya, such espousal had,
In couples gunched, and howling deep and shrill
Hell's hymenean. There Apollo, racked
Among a grove of scimitars that grew
Like sedges through his deity, suppressed
His tuneless note a moment when he saw
His conqueror come so soon to share his fate;
Thor, clamorous on an antlered couch, pronounced
Infernall welcome; and Aidoneus, stabbed
In every limb and organ, lifted up
A piercing voice that for a breath outsoared
The thundrous quire of Hell. This heard and seen
Within the instant of my entrance, more
I could not mark for the appalling pain
That the first breath of Hell instilled, but flung
My unheard cry into the whelming noise,
Absorbed in monstrous torment. Yet I knew,
By the inherent faculty of Hell,
That my divine companion of the night
Impaled throughout her sumptuous deity—
Beside Athene strung upon a stake!—
Wriggled and yelled abominably hurt.

Also I knew (in the one instant still,
Like all the happening in the Hell of the Gods)
That on the adamantine bastion hung
A figure crucified, which was myself;
And that beside myself there hanging, I,
A second time, being he who entered, nailed
Through either palm at arm's length drawn, and through
My feet together pressed, beheld myself
Still standing at the entry, mouth agape
And pouring horror to behold a third
Appearance of myself against the wall
By hands and feet affixed! Then I, the man
I am, the very man, beside the three
Phantasmas of myself was also nailed:
For I, as man, was guilty of the gods,
Guilty of God; and in myself partook
Uniquely of the nature of the gods,
Having supped upon their food, and having loved
A deity, and been by her belov'd.
"Four persons in the Godhead—the Sire, the Son,
The Holy Spirit, and the Evil One,"
The faculty of Hell within me cried;
And in the instant, though that instant seemed
Eternity quadrupled, so intense
The fourfold agony became, the last
Of all the Hells, and the most terrible
Desisted wholly; and I stood once more
Alone upon the mountain of my choice,
And saw the northern dawn awake the world.

The mechanism of automatic fate
Brought it about that when I thought to die
Eternally, I died to live again.
Thus in my night adventure and my death
I purged the world of the last remnant left

Of Other World, the hideous Hell of the Gods,
Of virgin worship, and, in myself, of God—
Pernicious slander of material truth
So terribly avenged in the last Hell.
And thus I made the world a fit abode
For greatness and the men who yet may be;
And can myself with joy become again
The mountains and the ocean, the winds, the flowers,
And life and death, and fear and love and hope,
And tender sorrow and heavy grief, and all
Humanity, and all that thinks and is:
Remaining still the conscious mystery throned
Among the stars, with systems round beset,
By throngs of constellations haunted, discs
Gigantic looming white on every hand,
And married globes whose orbits intertwine,
Whose burnished lights instinct with diverse stains
Revolve about each other deep in space,
Saffron with sapphire, emerald with ruby-red,
And purple stars with topaz doubles sphered,
Or wonderful as instruments attuned
To some new ravishment of keen accord,
In virgin gold and lilac burning bright,
A stellar passion of harmonious fire.
I dare not, must not die: I am the sight
And hearing of the infinite; in me
Matter fulfils itself; before me none
Beheld or heard, imagined, thought or felt;
And though I make the mystery known to men,
It may be none hereafter shall achieve
The perfect purpose of eternity;
It may be that the Universe attains
Self-knowledge only once; and when I cease
To see and hear, imagine, think and feel,
The end may come, and matter, satisfied,

Devolve once more through wanton change, and tides
Of slow relapse, suns, systems, galaxies,
Back to ethereal oblivion, pure
Accomplished darkness, might immaculate
Augmenting everlasting in space.
Me, therefore, it beseems, while life endures,
To haunt my palace in the Milky Way,
And into music change the tumult high
That echoes through the vast, unvaulted courts
Interminable, where the nebulæ
Evolving constellations, their spindles whirl;
Me it beseems to take my joy in heaven,
Revealing glory by my soul conceived,
And by my soul begotten, in the rapt
Cohabitation with eternity.

EPILOGUE FROM "CAIN"

I HAVE told the truth; no more remains to tell:
God's curse is on us; and we make it do.
Our errant life is not unhappy; fear,
That harrows others, is to us unknown,
Being close to God by reason of His curse.
Sometimes I think that God Himself is cursed,
For all His things go wrong. We cannot guess;
He is very God of God, not God of men:
We feel His power, His inhumanity;
Yet, being men, we fain would think Him good.
Since in imagination we conceive
A merciful, a gracious God of men,
It may be that our prayer and innocent life
Will shame Him into goodness in the end.
Meantime His vengeance is upon us; so,
My blessing and God's curse be with you all.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

In making the selections, I have attempted primarily to present the entire curve of Davidson's poetical activity. Limits of space compel the omission of several important poems.

May I express the hope that, some day, Mr. Grant Richards, of London, Davidson's literary executor, will find it possible to publish a more or less complete edition of the poems?

The bibliography appended does not claim to be exhaustive, because it contains nothing which I have not handled personally. Its purpose is to serve those who desire further information and evidence, seeing that some of the books are not easy to obtain. The asterisks indicate prose works.

Another bibliography, differing from mine in certain respects, was published in *The London Mercury*, Vol. IV, pp. 299 f. (July, 1921). It is by C. K. Scott Moncrieff, the admirable translator of *Beowulf*. It may be added that no complete bibliography is possible till some one undertakes exploration of such sources as those indicated in the Foreword to *Miss Armstrong's and Other Circumstances* (British edition).

1885. **The North Wall*. Glasgow: Wilson & McCormick.
1886. *Bruce, a Drama in Five Acts*. Glasgow and London: Wilson & McCormick.
1888. *Smith, a Tragedy*. Glasgow: Frederick W. Wilson and Brother.
1890. *Scaramouch in Naxos, a Pantomime, and Other Plays*. Second Edition. London: T. Fisher Unwin. (Contains also *An Unhistorical Pastoral*, and *A Romantic Farce*. This note faces the title-page:—"Under the title of 'Plays' this Volume was printed and published for private circulation. In issuing this edition the Author takes the opportunity of correcting his title-page, and giving his work the title of the play he likes best.")
1890. **Perfervid, the Career of Ninian Jamieson*. London: Ward and Downey. (Part i. *The Career of Ninian Jamieson*. Part ii. *The Pilgrimage of Strong soul and Saunders Elshander*.)

1891. * *The Great Men and A Practical Novelist*. Ibid. (*A Practical Novelist* is a new version of *The North Wall*, with alterations).

1891. *In a Music Hall and Other Poems*. Ibid.

1892. * *Laura Ruthven's Widowhood* (with C. J. Wills). Three volumes. London: Lawrence and Bullen.

1893. * *Sentences and Paragraphs*. Ibid.

1893. *Fleet Street Eclogues*. London: Elkin Mathews & John Lane. (Third edition, Revised, 1895.)

1894. * *A Random Itinerary*. London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane. Boston: Copeland and Day. (Closes with the first published version of "A Ballad of Heaven.")

1894. *Ballads and Songs*. London: John Lane. Boston: Copeland and Day. (Later editions appear to be reprints.)

1894. * *Baptist Lake*. London: Ward and Downey.

1894. Plays, being: *An Unhistorical Pastoral* [written 1877]: *A Romantic Farce* [written 1878]: *Bruce, a Chronicle Play* [written 1884]: *Smith, a Tragic Farce* [written 1886]: and *Scaramouch in Naxos, a Pantomime* [written 1888]. London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane. Chicago: Stone and Kimball.

1895. * *A Full and True Account of the Wonderful Mission of Earl Lavender, Which Lasted One Night and One Day: with a History of the Pursuit of Earl Lavender and Lord Brumm by Mrs. Scanler and Maud Emblem*. With a Frontispiece by Aubrey Beardsley. London: Ward and Downey.

1896. *A Second Series of Fleet Street Eclogues*. London: John Lane. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company.

1896. * *Miss Armstrong's and Other Circumstances*. London: Methuen & Co. (Contains ten stories, six reprinted from journals and a magazine.)

1896. The same. New York: Stone & Kimball.

1897. *New Ballads*. London and New York: John Lane.

1897. * *Ninian Jamieson and A Practical Novelist*. London: Ward and Downey.

1898. *Godfrida, a Play in Four Acts*. New York and London: John Lane.

1899. *The Last Ballad and Other Poems*. London and New York: John Lane.

1901. * *Persian and Chinese Letters*. Being the *Lettres Persanes*, by Charles Louis, Baron de Montesquieu, Translated and Introduced by John Davidson: and *The Citizen of the*

World, by Oliver Goldsmith, with a Special Introduction by Oliver H. G. Leigh. Washington and London: M. Walter Dunne. (Davidson's Introduction contains 24 pp. It is drawn mainly from Louis Vian's *Histoire de Montesquieu*.)

1901. *Self's the Man, a Tragi-Comedy*. London: Grant Richards. ("Completed in September, 1899.")
1901. *Testaments by John Davidson. No. I. The Testament of a Vivisector*. Ibid.
1901. *Testaments by John Davidson. No. II. The Testament of a Man Forbid*. Ibid.
1902. *Testaments by John Davidson. No. III. The Testament of an Empire-BUILDER*. Ibid.
1903. *The Knight of the Maypole, a Comedy in Four Acts*. Ibid. ("This play was written in 1900.")
1903. * *A Rosary*. Ibid. (Mainly prose, probably salvage from journalism and reviewing; contains also the following verses:—Ode on the Coronation of Edward VII., of Britain and of Greater Britain, King; Sonnet from "La Reine Fiammette"; Butterflies, from "Pour la Couronne"; The Wastrel; Vilanelle; Eclogue of the Downs; Song from "La Reine Fiammette"; At the Door; The Soul.)
1904. *The Testament of a Prime Minister*. Ibid.
1904. *A Queen's Romance: a Version of Victor Hugo's "Ruy Blas"* written for Lewis Waller. Ibid. (Written in 1901: produced by Mr. Waller at the Imperial Theatre, Westminster, in 1904.)
1905. *Selected Poems*. London & New York: John Lane.
1905. *The Theatrorat: a Tragic Play of Church and Stage*. London: E. Grant Richards. (Has a self-revealing prose Introduction, entitled "Wordsworth's Immorality and Mine." Follow "Heaven and Hell"; "Interlude"; "God and Sin," giving a further exposition of Davidsonian materialism.)
1906. *Holiday and Other Poems*. Ibid. (Concludes with a prose essay "On Poetry.")
1907. *God and Mammon, a Trilogy. The Triumph of Mammon*. Ibid. (A drama in five acts. Concludes with a prose "Apology," in which the poet passes significant comments upon his life and writings.)
1908. *God and Mammon, a Trilogy. Mammon and His Message, Being the Second Part of God and Mammon*. Ibid. (A drama in five acts. Concludes with a most symptomatic prose "Epilogue" on Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Chris-

tianity; the Salvation Army; and the author's brand of materialism. The third part of the Trilogy was never published, probably never written.)

1908. *The Testament of John Davidson*. Ibid. (Contains a curious prose "Dedication to the Peers Temporal of Great Britain and Ireland," illustrative of Davidson's "imperialism.")

1909.. * *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, with Annotations and a General Introduction by Sidney Lee*. Volume xxxviii, Sonnets, with a Special Introduction by John Davidson. New York: George D. Sproul. [Published in London as "Renaissance Edition," 1907-09; in New York as "The University Press Shakespeare," 40 vols.]

1909. *Fleet Street and Other Poems*. Ibid. (Contains the brief and most pathetic Preface, in which Davidson strikes his flag. He was never seen alive after he left his home to mail the MS. of this book to Mr. Grant Richards. Six months later, his body was found in the English Channel.)

1910. * *The Man Forbid and Other Essays*. With an Introduction by Edward J. O'Brien. Boston: The Ball Publishing Co. (Like *Sentences and Paragraphs*, *A Random Itinerary*, and *A Rosary*, is apparently salvage from journalism.)

1923. * *Broadway Translations. Montesquieu, Persian Letters*. Translated by John Davidson, with an Introduction. London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co.

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